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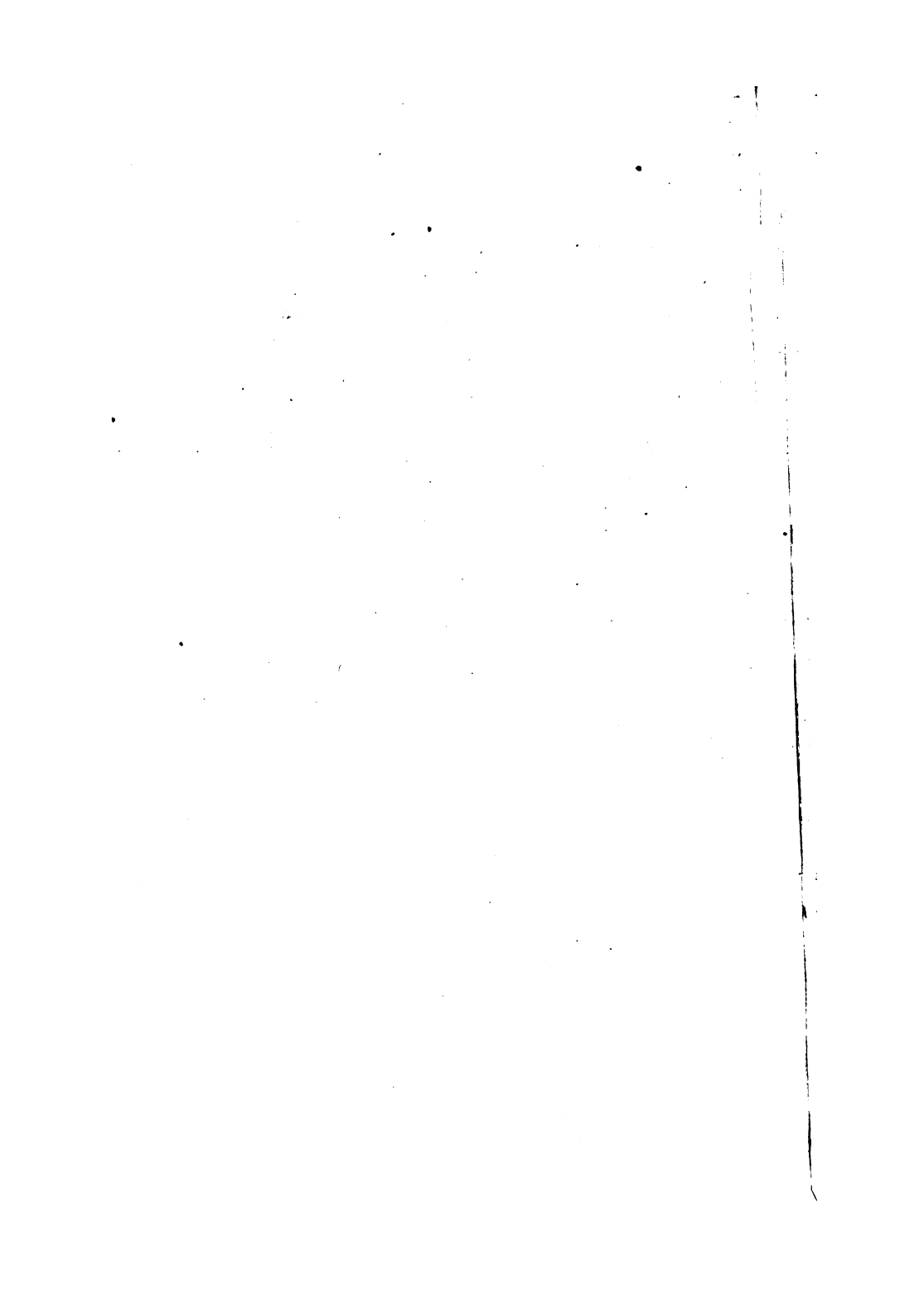
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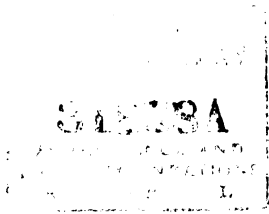


REVISED
EDITION
1887

NEW YORK CHICAGO
Fleming H. Revell Company
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

A/S

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FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY



New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 17 North Wabash Ave.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 75 Princes Street

To
DAVID PAE

911141

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I

SHE GOES ON A JOURNEY

M'A fayther wasna keen on the notion, and maybe ma mither had her doubts, but ma sister backed me up for a' she was worth—which was a guid deal jist then, for she was on the eve o' gettin' married to Adam Jamieson, and that easy agitated, her parents could refuse her naething.

When it was decided I was to gang, she fell on ma neck and bursted in tears.

“It's a noble deed ye're daein', Jemima,” she says. “I wish I had been a better big sister to ye.”

“Oh, we'll no' gang back on that,” I says, generouslike, “and it's never ower late to mend, and ye'll maybe be wealthy someday.”

Of course I didna really mean that she

JUST JEMIMA

had ever been a bad sister, but then neither did she; folk'll say onything when a weddin's on.

I'm no' gaun to describe the weddin', paper bein' that dear, nor hoo I had to slope for the station afore the feast was entirely shifted. I'll merely mention that there wasna a dry hanky in the room, the gents bein' so galliant as to lend theirs to the ladies, after the latter's was soaked. Ye see, everybody was that vexed for the parents lossin' their twa dear daughters at one fell sweep.

Likewise I'll pass ower the railway journey. It was a terrible warm day, an' to tell ye the truth, I was that wearied wi' a' the excitement that afore long I was dozin', and twa hours had rolled awa' when I got a queer start, hearin' a voice cryin' the name o' ma station. I was but half awake when I found masel' wi' ma things on the platform; and the train gaed on

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again. When a young porter cam' up holdin' oot his hand, I was that confused that I gi'ed it a shake.

"I was only wantin' your ticket," says he; "but I'm delighted to see ye."

I'll no' deny that I blushed, but I managed to pass him ma ticket as if he had been dirt.

He looked at it.

"I doubt ye've been hasty," says he. "Ye've alit at the previous station."

"What station's this?" says I, no' believin' him.

He pinte to a board.

"If ye canna spell, I'll be glad to assist ye."

I read the name—"Sunnyburn."

"Oh, help!" says I, and sat doon on ma box. But I was up again like a shot. "The man cried oot 'Westerbay,'" I says, gey angry. "Wha was the man? Fetch a' the porters this instant!"

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“ I’m the staff,” says he, “ except for the station master, and he’s awa’ to his tea.”

“ Was it him that cried out the name? ” says I.

“ It was the staff,” says he.

“ Then can ye swear ye didna cry ‘ Westerbay ’? ”

At that he jamp. Then he doubled up his fist and gi’ed hissels’ a dunt on the nose.

“ Oh, criffens! ” says he, “ maybe ye’re right. Ye see I got shifted here frae ‘ Westerbay ’ only a month back.”

I collapsed on to ma faithful box.

“ Oh, for ony favour, dinna cry! ” he says.

“ Cry? ” says I. “ I’ve a guid mind to yell! Oh, what for did your mither let ye be a porter? ”

Jist then the station master cam’ along.

“ What’s ado, lassie? ” says he. “ Lost your ticket? ”

SHE GOES ON A JOURNEY

Weel, I'll say this for the porter: he told the truth and didna try to excupulate hissel'.

"See here, ma lad," says the station master, "when ye gang off duty the nicht, get a spade and dig a nice wee hole, and become a turnip. It's a' ye're fit for." Then he turned to me. "Fortunately it's no' vera serious for you, miss. The hoose ye're bound for lies aboot half-roads betwixt this and Westerbay station—less nor twa mile frae this. Peter here—afore he digs hissel' in—'ll get a barrow and hurl your box for ye. But first, come along wi' me, and the wife'll gi'e ye a cup o' tea."

There's a station master for ye! What an example to some o' them at the big city stations! An' his wife was jist as nice. She gi'ed me champion scones wi' honey frae her ain private bumbees. May Heaven reward her and her pets!

When I was ready to tak' the road,

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there was the porter waitin' wi' the barrow. He didna look as sheepish as I expected, but I soon seen that his face wasna adopted for lookin' sheepish, bein' like a horse's.

"Weel, we set oot without speakin'. I kept ma heid up, and looked neither to right nor left till I tipped ower a stane and near fell on ma nose.

"Ye're no' used to country roads, I see," he says politelike.

"I hope I'll never be used to this road," I answers him.

After a while he tried again.

"I see your address is 'Seaview.' Ye'll get a view o' the sea there."

"Thanks for the warnin'," says I.

"I'll hold ma tongue," says he.

"Oh, speak to the birds if ye like," says I.

To ma surprise he didna say another word.

At last I took a squint at him. I hadna

SHE GOES ON A JOURNEY

noticed it afore, but he had a game leg. That made me feel kin' o' different.

"Excuse me," says I, "but ha'e ye been at the wars?"

"Fell off a tree when I was young, worse luck," says he.

"Weel, ye're honest, onyway, and I'm sure your mither doesna think it worse luck. I had twa brithers fightin'."

After that we got mair frien'ly—at least, I let him haver.

He told me aboot the place, and pinte oot subjects o' interest, sich as potato fields and farmhooses and coos, etc.

Though I wasna gaun to ask, I was hopin' he would tell me something about the hoose I was bound for.

So I enquired if "Seaview" wasna in sicht yet.

"No' yet," says he. "Are ye in a hurry to see it?"

"I jist am. I'm late, as ye ken."

JUST JEMIMA

“ Dinna keep that up against me, Jemima.”

“ Dinna you call me that!” says I, sharplike.

“ The rest o’ your name has got rubbed off the label,” he says. “ Mines is Taggart—Peter Taggart.”

I didna reply.

“ D’ye ken,” he says at last, “ until this day I thought Jemima wasna a real name.”

“ Ye should read your Bible,” says I.

“ If ye tell me the place ——”

“ Begin at the beginnin’ and read till ye come to it. It would dae ye guid,” I says sternlike.

“ I’ll no’ deny that,” says he. “ Still, it’ll dae me nae harm to ask at the minister next time he tak’s the train. Weel, are ye no’ gaun to tell me what ye’re gaun to ‘ Seaview ’ for?”

“ I’m the new hoose-table-maid,” I an-

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swers boldly, though I wasna feelin' extra bold.

He drapped the barrow, and stood and looked at me.

“What's wrang wi' ye?” says I.

“Hoo auld are ye?” says he.

“That's nane o' your business.”

“Sixteen?”

“I'll soon be three and twinty.”

Without a word he started pushin' the barrow again. He seemed to be offended.

“Never mind ma age,” I says. “What sort o' place is it at ‘Seaview’?”

“I'm sorry for ye, if ye're really gaun to service there,” he says.

“What's wrang wi' it?”

“Servants never bide. Maybe because it's that dull.”

“But it's a boardin' hoose.”

“Ay; but they're maistly stuck-up folk in bad health, and there's never anything

JUST JEMIMA

daein'," says he. "Ye'll be wishin' ye was dead in a week."

If ma box had been handy I would ha'e sat doon again. What a blow! It's true that I was gaun to "Seaview" to oblige ma sister, but a' the same, I was lookin' forward to seein' life.

"Keep up your heart," says the porter. "Ye'll get your meat, onyway. An' maybe they've healthier visitors noo nor when I last heard. But," says he, solemn-like, "it's ma duty to warn ye that there's a boots at 'Seaview'!"

"A what?" says I.

"A sort o' waiter. Beware o' him!"

"Why?"

"Never mind. Then there's the landlady's husband—beware o' him!"

"Mercy!" I exclaims, "what's wrang wi' him?"

"And at the station," he says, without stoppin', "there's a porter called John

SHE GOES ON A JOURNEY

Craw—beware o' *him!* And the chap that drives the baker's van ——”

“ Goodness gracious! Are they a' bad?”

“ Rotten! Ye'd best beware o' a' the men in this neighbourhood,” he says. “ When ye've settled on your nights out, I'll be glad to show ye the local scenery and so forth. I'm free after 6 P. M. Every night for the next week or so, I'll look out for ye on this road—eh, *Je-mima?* ”

“ Behave yoursel'!” I says gey sharp. “ I'm obliged for your offer, but I was brought up ower strict ever to think o' sich a thing. Nae need to tell me to beware o' the men. I've always bewore, and always will.”

“ Oh, but we're no' a' rotten,” he says in a hurry.

“ Is this 'Seaview' we're noo approachin'?” I enquires, pintin' haughtily wi' ma auld bumberstick.

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“That’s the back o’ it. We’ll be at the sea in a minute,” he says. “But as I was sayin’, the men ——”

“What’s your fare for hurlin’ ma box?” I interrogates.

“Dinna insult me,” says he, and for a while he was dumb. Then he says: “Supposin’, on a fine night, we was to meet accidental-like—eh?”

I held ma peace and let him haver till suddenly we turned a corner, and there was the sea. My, it looked lovely, did the Firth o’ Clyde, that evenin’.

“I believe I’ll be happy here,” says I.

“Ye ha’e ma best wishes,” says he. “Noo here’s the side entrance to ‘Sea-view’; the front is further on. Which dae ye prefer?”

“Your manners is improvin’,” says I. “I think the side’ll dae for a start.”

So we gaed in and through a fine garden full o’ cabbages and the like. It was a

SHE GOES ON A JOURNEY

braw hoose even at the back. And then we cam' to a green door.

He set doon ma box as if it had been eggs, and held oot his hand, which I couldna exactly refuse.

“Remember ma name's Peter,” he whispers. “You and me ought to be frien's, seein' that both oor names is in the Bible. Will ye no' conseeder it?”

I swithered withoot lettin' him see I was switherin'.

“Supposin' I could get somebody to introduce us,” he says.

“His name would need to be in the Bible,” says I.

“I think I could manage that!” he cries.

“It would need to be either Nebuchadnezzar or Hannibal.”

“Aw, that's no' fair,” says he. Then he gi'ed a bit laugh. “Ye've some fun in ye, after a', Jemima, and ye're bonny forbye. So long and guid luck to ye.”

JUST JEMIMA

He made to gang, cam' back wi' a face like a fiddle, and whispered:

“ Beware o' the Boots.”

Then he gaed off wi' his barrow, double-quick.

Suddenly I felt awfu' lonely and kin' o' feart. Ye see, I hadna the least bit o' a notion what would happen to me on the other side o' that green door. I felt masel' gettin' wee-er and wee-er, and noo I canna imagine what kept me frae runnin' awa'. Maybe it was jist that I had nae place to run to.

So at last I put ma hand up to the knocker and gi'ed a chap that wouldna ha'e frightened a moose.

II

▲ GOOD IMPRESSION

IT wasna to be expected that ony humane ear would hear ma first knock, and after what seemed like three weeks I took hold o' the knocker again. But it slipped frae ma fingers and made sich a bang, I near drapped on the door-step in a swoon. As long as I live on this testerial globe, I'll never see a green door without rememberin' ma arrival at "Sea-view."

I was still decomposed when the door was opened by a young man in his shirt-sleeves, which was white. He was a tall chap, but unco thin, and his face was awfu' pale after the porter's rubikind mug.

"Guid evenin'," says he in a soft voice.
"Was the train late?"

But I was past speechifyin', and maybe

JUST JEMIMA

he seen that something was wrong, for says he—pintin' up a long blue passage:—

“Mrs. Parkins is in the kitchen—last door on the left. I'll look after your trunk.”

Wi' a sinkin' feelin' I gaed up the passage. Suddenly I felt a terrible nice smell of guid things cookin'. It seemed to revive ma droopin' spirits, but no' for long. Next moment I was standin' tremelin' jist inside the last door on the left.

It was a big, braw kitchen, though no' as tidy as ma mither's; but there was a reason for that. A lady—oh, I could see that she was a lady right enough—was at the table, wi' a white apron on her, as busy as could be. She wasna really near as large as she looked to me then. She would be forty or fifty, maybe; her hair was beginnin' to turn gray. I daresay she had been bonny in her youth. Noo her face was weariedlike.

A GOOD IMPRESSION

She was gently stirrin' something in a bowl, and she didna lift her eyes.

"So you've come at last!" she says.
"What delayed you?"

I tried to speak, but jist let oot a squeak.

Then she looked at me.

"Gracious heavens!" she cries. "Who on earth are you?"

I managed to reply: "Hoose-table-
maid, mem."

"You!" says she, drappin' the spoon wi' a splash. "You are not the girl I engaged last week! What's your name?"

"Jemima, mem."

"Is that all?"

"Just."

"Just Jemima? Absurd!"

"Jemima Just, mem," says I.

"Oh," says she, "I remember! But I engaged a Jessie Just. Why are you here?"

JUST JEMIMA

I think she must ha'e liked the look o' me, for she wasna as cross as she might ha'e been, and so I managed to tell ma story.

"It was this way, mem," says I. "Ma sister Jessie intended for to keep her bargain, but yesterday her young man got leave unexpectedlike, and dear knows when she would get another chance, and so they got married this mornin'——"

"She might at least have sent me word," says Mrs. Parkins.

"Weel, mem, her and me cam' to the conclusion that one deed was better nor a heap o' words, and I was keen to see life, and betwixt us we persuaded fayther and mither, and so ——" I stopped, for I couldna get ony further.

"But you're a mere child," she says. "How old are you?"

"I'll sune be three and twinty," I says, lookin' at the bowl.

A GOOD IMPRESSION

“ Oh, nonsense! Come, come, tell the truth! ”

“ I’m in ma eighteenth year, mem.”

“ When were you seventeen? ”

“ Last week, mem.”

“ And why did you say you would soon be twenty-three? ”

“ Time flies, mem.”

She wagged her head sorrowful-like.
At last she says:—

“ You can’t have had any experience.”

I was sort o’ ready for her this time.

“ I’ve been brought up terrible strict, and I’ve aye helped ma mither in the hoose, and I’m rael quick at the uptak’. I never need to be told a thing twice; I can repeat the 119th Psalm without stoppin’, except for breath; an’ I’m maist economic. And, of course, I would never expect ma sister’s wage.”

At that she shut her mouth close, and then she took up the spoon and stirred for

JUST JEMIMA

a while, and then she stopped and gi'ed a guid look up and doon.

“Do you happen to have any friends in this neighbourhood?”

“No' even what ye might ca' a bowin' acquaintance,” says I, which was maybe no' quite fair to the porter.

“Well,” she says, “since you can't get home to-night, I suppose you must stay here. Perhaps I may give you a trial.”

“Hurray! I'm ready!” I cries afore I kent what I was sayin'. I was that excited, I tore off ma hat, and brought doon ma hair, which had scarcely got used to bein' up. Luckily it's no' bad hair, bein' chestnut, wi' a natural wave, and as thick as thick.

“Come, Jemima,” she says, as if she hadna noticed onything, “and I'll show you your room.” And a nice wee room it was. “Get changed as quickly as you can,” says she.

A GOOD IMPRESSION

“Yes, mem,” says I. “Wrapper or black dress?” Ye see, I was prepared for onything, for Mither and me had sat up near a’ nicht, alterin’ Jessie’s things to fit me. Fortunately Jessie’s the stout one.

“Black,” says she. “We dine at 7:30.”

“I think I can thole till then,” says I. It was oot afore I kent. But I was quick to beg her pardon, explainin’ that happiness had made me forget masel’. As ma fayther often said to ma sister, independence is a fine thing, but ower mony girls nooadays seems to think it’s another word for impiddence.

When she had left me, I sat doon on ma faithful box and gi’ed ‘masel’ three hugs.

Jessie’s black lustre was split new, and I rather fancied masel’ for smart when I ran back to the kitchen. In the passage I nearly gaed bang into a tray o’ silver

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things in front o' the young man which had opened the door to me. He gi'ed me a smile, but I never let on I seen it.

Mrs. Parkins didna gi'e me a smile, but a wee nod as if she was pleased. Then she started to ask questions.

"Are you an early riser?" was the first.

Ma sister had warned me to be ready for it.

"Yes, mem," says I. "Fayther gangs to his work at the back o' six."

"Can you make beds?" was another.

"Like fun!" I says. "I can dae onything ord'nar' aboot the hoose, mem. Mak' parritch, bile tatties, bake scones and pancakes, scrub and clean, toast cheese, when there's ony, knit, darn, beat ma fayther at the draughts ——"

"Really!" says she. "I don't suppose you can lay and wait the table."

"No' yet," says I, "but once seen, never forgot."

A GOOD IMPRESSION

“You’re not afraid o’ hard work, I hope,” she says, lookin’ me in the face.

“Mem,” says I, “I’m afraid o’ naething but coos and, maybe, men.”

“There are plenty of cows here,” she says, wi’ a wee smile. “But I must get on with these patties.”

“Is there naething I could be daein’ for ye the noo?”

“Just stay where you are, Jemima, and listen,” she replies. “I’ll explain some things about the house, which will make it easier for you afterwards.”

So I folded ma hands and stood attentive-like. After she had told me a heap o’ things, she says:—

“All the rooms, except the green and white rooms, are occupied. Colonel Beadle and Mrs. Beadle, who have made several long stays at ‘Seaview,’ have the blue room. Miss Tinto—she also has been here before—has the pink room.

JUST JEMIMA

Mrs. Pagan, who came for the first time on Monday, has the heliotrope, and Mr. Shard the old gold room. Now, as it is necessary for you to remember, I'll go over them again. Listen carefully."

"I've got them safe in ma brain, mem," says I, wantin' to show off ma quick up-tak'. "I'll recite them. Colonel and Mrs. Beetle ——"

"Beadle."

"Colonel and Mrs. Beadle—no' much difference—blue; Miss Tinto pinko—beg pardon, pink; Mrs. Pagan and Mr. Shark ——"

"Stop, stop!" she cries. "Mrs. Pagan, heliotrope."

"And Mr. Shark, rolled gold. Is that no' correc', mem?"

"Very good, Jemima," she says, wi' a bit laugh. "But please remember that there are no beetles nor sharks in this

A GOOD IMPRESSION

house. Mr. Shard is the name, and his room is *old gold*."

"I'll mind that," I says. "And will them be a' your lodgers, mem?"

"Paying guests, Jemima. Yes; they are all at present; but though few, they require a great deal of attention. I have made a specialty of suiting individual tastes, and that is why I have so many regular clients in this rather out-of-the-way spot."

"Ye must be clever, mem," says I.

She didna appear to catch the compliment.

"I have made up a list of their chief likes and dislikes," says she, "and if you stay on here, you will require to study it. Now you had better come and get acquainted with the house. A pity you could not have arrived in the morning, but it can't be helped. You will not attempt any waiting to-night, but you may

JUST JEMIMA

stand by the sideboard and watch how Frederick does it. If he should ask you to do any little thing, of course, you will do it.”

By the time we was through wi’ the hoose, I’ll admit ma head was in a bizz, but I was fair bilin’ wi’ eagerosity to mak’ a start.

“ This is the job for me! ” says I.

She wasna angry, but she says:—

“ I think you are a little excited, Jemima, and tired, too. Go to your room and sit there quietly till I call you. Do nothing at all. Just get your wits together—if you really want to be a help.”

Weel, I jist did as I was bid, and to tell ye the truth I wasna sorry to get sittin’ doon. I wrote a card to ma mither, and was jist aboot to dae another to Jessie, when there was a knock at the door. I was oot in a jiffy, and seen the young man in the white shirt-sleeves disappearin’ into

A GOOD IMPRESSION

the kitchen. I thought he had been tryin' to be funny, but the next instant, lookin' doon, I spied a cup o' tea and some scones and butter.

It was jist what I had been needin' without knowin' it.

When it was devoured, I took the card I had wrote to ma mither, and added the followin':

“ P. S.—This is Heaven.”

Oh, me! what a mercy we canna squint into the future!

III

A SIDE SLIP

AT twenty past seven, Mrs. Parkins cried on me to come ben to the kitchen. She had snodded hersel' up, and ye would never ha'e dreamed she had ever cooked as much as a haricot bean in a' her life.

"Now, Jemima," she says, "you may help Frederick to carry things between here and the dining-room. When you are not doing that, you must stand where he will show you, and watch—not stare—and learn as much as you can. Do nothing unless Frederick tells you."

With that she hurried awa', leavin' me wi' the young man, which had noo a nate black jayket. He was busy puttin' things on a tray.

"Thank ye for the tea," says I.

A SIDE SLIP

“Welcome,” says he. “I’m sure Mrs. Parkins would ha’e thought o’ it hersel’, if she hadna been so hardwrought.”

“She seems to be a wonder,” says I, wi’ a squint at a’ the numerous pots and pans on the range. “Has she never a cook?”

“Oh, ay,” says he, “frequently. But I’ll tell ye aboot things later on, if ye like.”

“I’m no’ curious,” says I.

“I believe ye,” says he. “But noo I’ll be obliged if ye’ll gi’e me a hand.”

At 7:30 he played on a thing called a gong, which made ma flesh creep. Then he showed me ma place in the dinin’-room—at the end o’ the sideboard, where I was sort o’ hid by a screen. I kept weel back till a’ the folk was in the room, but as soon as I heard them gettin’ their soup, I took a keek at them. My! It was as guid as a picture hoose!

I was pretty sure which was which with-

JUST JEMINA

oot bein' told. The man at the top o' the table I took to be Mr. Parkins, though Mrs. P. hadna mentioned his bein' alive, and I couldna ha'e took the porter's word serious. He didna seem onything to be-ware o'. He had a long nose on a long face, wi' a wheen hairs across the top, and a droopin' red mustache, and a pair o' eyes that would ha'e been fine in a fish; but he was vera pleasant and polite to everybody. He looked a useless kin' o' body. I would ha'e been sorry for him if I hadna been sorry for his wife. She was a treat; you would ha'e said she was at "Seaview" for her holidays. But every silver linin' has its cloud.

Then I couldna but recognize the Col. and Mrs. Beetle. They was up in years. She was a wee lady, gray like a moose, and wi' aboot as much spirits, but I was sure she was nice. I hated the Col. at first sight. Nae doubt he had

A SIDE SLIP

been a brave man in his time, but if a man canna be kind when he's auld, what's the use of him gettin' auld? He had a pair of eyebrows like mustaches, and when onybody spoke to him, they gaed up as if he had pulled a string, and he looked as fierce as a teeger. But he was pleasant enough to everybody except his wife. If she opened her mooth, he near bit her nose off. He sat betwixt her and Miss Tinto. Miss T. was nae chicken, though she behave like one fresh from the shell. She said "How funny!" to near everything that was told her. I fancied she was mashed on Mr. Shark, which sat opposite her. He was liker a goat nor a shark, but he had a kind face, which is better nor a handsome appearance. His conversation was about the things he had picked up on the sea-shore that afternoon, and I got that interested, I near inquired if he hadna caught onything in the wilk line.

JUST JEMIMA

There was naething special about Mrs. Pagan. She was a fat wife wi' gold glasses and nae end o' jewelry, and she payed attention to her rations. She had a black bottle dressed up in a napkin in front o' her. The Col. had a yellow one, naked.

I was that ta'en up wi' them a', that when Frederick, after gi'ein' them their fish, touched ma elbow, I near let oot a yell.

"Dae ye think ye could fill the glasses?" he whispers. "Miss Tinto first."

"Leave it to me," says I, and I stepped oot, never noticin' that he was offerin' me a big water joog. I heard him gi'e a hiss, but jist then the Col. lifted the yellow bottle, and I jump forward.

I was jist in time.

"Excuse me," says I, polite-like, nip-pin' the bottle frae his fingers, "but ladies

A SIDE SLIP

first, if *you* please." And next moment I was fillin' up Miss Tinto's tumbler.

She let oot a screech ye could ha'e heard a mile awa'.

Afore I could ask her what was wrang wi' her, I heard Mrs. Parkins' voice, and oh! it was like cauld water doon ma back.

"Replace Colonel Beadle's whisky, and leave the room."

She didna need to bid me twice. I kent I was done for. I gi'ed the man his bottle and stottered frae the room. Hoo I reached ma bedroom history will never tell. I bolted the door and checked ma finger, but the agony was naething to me then. I sunk doon on ma faithful box, and flung ma apron ower ma heid and grat.

When aboot five years had rolled awa', I got up to destroy the post card I had wrote to ma nither, but afore I could dae

JUST JEMIMA

it, there was a knockin' at the door. Wi' ma heart in ma mooth, I opened.

Frederick was standin' there, holdin' a big tray. He was solemn except for his big black eyes.

"Ye'll be hungry," says he. "Tak' a grip o' this."

I shook ma head.

"Cheer up!" says he, and pushed the tray at me, so that I had to tak' it. He was for off when I managed to ask if I had gotten the sack.

"Hope not," he says, wi' a bit laugh. "Ye gi'ed them a' a shake up, but they was needin' it badly. Miss Tinto's great on temperance."

"Oh, me!" I groaned.

"I canna bide the noo—got to serve the coffee," he says. "If ye feel fit for it, ye might gi'e me a hand at washin' up later on." And wi' that he sloped.

I set the tray on the bed and shut the

A SIDE SLIP

door. I drapped a few mair tears, and then I asked a blessin' on the meat includin' Frederick, and then I blew ma nose and started on the tray. Oh, what tastiness! Oh, what hunger!

Half an hour later, I was busy at the big sink wi' Frederick. There was about a thousand dishes, but I didna mind that.

"The Colonel," says Frederick, "has got ower his fright. I heard him sayin' ye was a neat little baggage."

"What cheek!" says I, but I couldna help smilin'. I didna smile for long, though. "What will Mrs. Parkins say to me?" I asked him.

"I'm thinkin' she'll gi'e ye another chance when she sees hoo ye can wash dishes," he says. "Ye're the smartest I've struck, Jemima."

I frowned upon him.

"Ye shouldna to be callin' me that—so

JUST JEMIMA

soon," I tells him. I doubt I was blushin' slightly.

"I was hopin' we was like to be frien's," says he.

"Maybe—I dinna ken—though ye've been extra kind to me; but, ye see, I could never, never call ye 'Frederick.'"

"I hope ye never will, for ma real name is 'Alec.' But Mr. Parkins's bein' the same, Mrs. Parkins had to gi'e me another. So ye can surely manage to say 'Alec.'"

"What lots o' hot water there is here!" says I.

"We ha'e got to call each other something," he says. "There's a new cook comin' the morn—at least she's expected—and she'll think us daft if we're ower polite."

"I dinna want to be that," says I, and stuck.

"I'd tak' it as a special favour, Miss Just," says he.

A SIDE SLIP

“ Oh, that doesna soun’ right either,” I cries. “ But dae ye no’ conseeder Jemima a queer name? Some folk does. I’ve often wished I had been christened ‘ Gladys ’—a lovely name!”

“ I’ve heard uglier,” he replies, “ but I’d sooner hear Jemima, Jemima.”

“ Aweel,” says I, wi’ a sigh o’ resignation, “ what must be must be! But I’m no’ gaun to call ye ‘ Alec ’ for ages. I was brought up vera strict, and although I dinna ken everything about the world yet, still I’m no’ entirely as green as grass. And so ye must understand, Alec,—oh, dear, I wasna thinkin’ what I was sayin’!”

Jist then a bell rang twice.

“ That’s for you,” says he. “ Ye’re wanted in her office. D’ye ken where it is?”

“ Will ye show me?” I says, dryin’ ma hands. I was feelin’ as if I had tumbled off a steeple.

JUST JEMIMA

“ I will that,” he says. “ And see here, Jemima, keep up your heart. She canna eat ye. And if she does sack ye, I’ll throw up ma place, and then she’ll be done for. Mind ye, I like her, but ——” And his black eyes gi’ed me a look.

I could ha’e kicked masel’ for turnin’ red.

Aweel, I didna get the sack. In fac’, I was surprised at the softness o’ Mrs. Parkins. She did gi’e me a bit lecture, but she didna seek to terrify me. She said I could thank ma stars she had a sense o’ humour; a’ the same, she couldna afford to ha’e folk affronted in her hoose, and Miss Tinto had been greatly upset.

“ Ay,” I remarks, “ she looks as if she would tak’ the huff gey easy, but, as ma fayther says whiles, ‘ we canna choose oor customers in this world, mem.’ ”

“ That is very true, Jemima,” she says, “ but you must not interrupt.”

A SIDE SLIP

Then she gi'ed me instructions in ma duties about the hoose, and presented me wi' a long list o' the boarders' likes and dislikes.

“If this is your own writin', mem,” says I, “it does ye credit; it's really splendid!”

I couldna be sure whether she caught the compliment or no'. She told me it was time I was tidyin' up the kitchen and gettin' to ma bed. She would be round later to lock up.

“Remember,” says she, “to wind your clock. The alarum is set for six.”

“Trust me,” says I; “the lark'll be a bad second the morn's mornin'!”

In the kitchen I found Frederick preparin' for to depart. Everything was as neat as a new pin.

I didna ken what to say to him, but I doubt I gi'ed him a look o' gratitude which would haunt him till his diein' day.

JUST JEMIMA

“So ye ha’ena got the sack,” he says, cheery-like. “I hope ye’ll be happy here. Mind, ye can aye depend on me. Noo, I must gang. See ye the morn, aboot 6:30. Guidnicht, Jemima,” he says frae the door.

“Guidnicht,” says I, “and thank ye.”

When I gaed to ma room I couldna help wonderin’ aboot him. It seemed queer for a chap like him to be daein’ jobs aboot a hoose. But it was nane o’ ma business, and I was ower sleepy to wonder long. “He has a kind heart onyway,” was ma last thought, and as the poet says: “Kind hearts is mair nor cornets,” whatever that means.

IV.

TWO STRINGS

THIS no' bein' a complete biography, I winna say onything about ma first few days at "Sea-view," except that I was up far ower early, got guid meals, and discovered that Mrs. Parkins expected work for her money.

On Friday afternoon I was cleanin' the silver in the pantry. Frederick—I ha'e decided to call him by that name in public—was gi'ein' me a hand, or, to be strictly correct, learnin' me the way. The cook had arrove. She was up in years, gey stout, awfu' serious, and didna seem to ha'e ony notion o' conversation.

I was enquirin' at Frederick why Mrs. Parkins couldna keep her servants mair nor a month in sich a decent hoose.

"It's the dulness o' the place," says he,

JUST JEMIMA

“and the distance frae the town; likewise the great scarcity o’ men.”

“But you’re a man,” says I.

He gi’ed a bit laugh.

“I’ve done ma best to oblige Mrs. Parkins,” he says. “In fac’, I near got masel’ engaged to one o’ them. It caused her to bide ower the month, but I couldna keep it up. She was forty, if she was a day.”

“Weel, I never!” says I. “But surely ye’re no’ tellin’ me that Mrs. Parkins asked ye to ——”

“Bless your heart, she wouldna dae that! Mrs. Parkins did ma mither a guid turn last year, and it was up to me to pay it back. But except for the one I’ve mentioned, they didna tak’ me seriouslike.”

“It would be the auld one’s last chance,” I says. “I canna think it was jist fair o’ ye. What’s your age?”

“Five and twinty.”

TWO STRINGS

“ Oh, weel, she could hardly expect ye to marry her. Was she nice lookin’? ”

“ Extremely handsome up to her neck. But I could never fall in love wi’ ony but a young girl, Jemima,” he says. “ Hoo auld are ye? ”

“ Near three and twinty.”

“ Mak’ it fifty when ye’re at it!” says he.

“ We’ll never be finished wi’ the silver at this rate,” says I.

He looked at me kin’ o’ sternlike.

“ I’m thinkin’ ye’ve had a heap o’ sweet-hearts in your time,” he says.

“ I never had sich a thing!” I cries.

“ Then ye canna be three and twinty, or onything like it.”

“ I’ve been brought up extra strict,” I tells him.

“ I can believe ye there,” he says. “ Am I the first man frien’ ye’ve ever had? ”

“ If ye was a true frien’,” says I, “ ye would believe in ma age.”

JUST JEMIMA

I thought I had settled him, but after a while he says:—

“Ye dinna behave as if ye had kent many chaps. That’s one o’ the things I like about ye, Jemima.”

“Weel, ye can stop likin’ it,” I answered gey sharp. “Surely I can ken chaps without bein’ silly about them. An’ dinna be thinkin’ ye’re the only man I ken in this place, for ye’re no’!”

It was stupid o’ me, but the words was oot afore I could stop them.

“What?” says he. “Ye ha’ena had the chance to mak’ ony acquaintances since ye cam’ here, and ye told me ye had nae frien’s hereabouts.”

I smiled to mase’.

“Wha is he?” he cries.

“Never you mind!”

“I’ll find oot!”

“If ye dae, ye’ll behold an example to follow.” Somehow I had to gang on. I

TWO STRINGS

hove a sigh and near upset the dish o' polishin' stuff. "Oh, dear!" says I, "but that young man was terrible kind to me! When I got oot at the wrang station, that wearied, I'm sure I dinna ken what I would ha'e done withoot the tea and lovely honey!"

"The swine!" says Frederick. "Weel, I didna mean that exactly. But noo I ken him—he's the porter at Sunnyburn—a daft idiot. Aweel, he was never introduced to ye proper-like."

"Nae mair was you!"

"I was! Mrs. Parkins said: 'This is Frederick,' and you got red in the face!"

"I didna! She didna mention ma name, so it wasna a proper introduction. Ye got ma name off ma box, same as the porter done."

"Dinna tell me he had the neck to call ye 'Jemima!'"

JUST JEMIMA

“I winna tell ye onything. Ye’re no’ what I thought ye was.”

“What did ye thought—think—I am—I mean—was?” He was confused.

“Never mind! Kindly clear oot. I can finish this silver masel’,” I says, wi’ ma nose in the air.

He stared at me for half a minute afore he spoke. Then he says:—

“Ah, come on, Jemima, dinna be huffy.”

“I beg your pardon!” says I ironly.

“I didna mean for to offend ye,” says he. “What’s the use o’ quarrelin’ about a rotten porter?”

“Wha told ye I was quarrelin’? I’ve mair to think about.”

“Well, then, forgive me.”

“What for?”

“For doubtin’ your word about your age.”

He kin’ o’ had me that time. Onyway, I’ve aye been a great one for peace.

TWO STRINGS

“ Maybe I did exaggerate a wee bit,” I says, vera busy wi’ the brush. “ Besides, it was the station master that gi’ed me ma tea.”

“ Noo, that’s nice o’ ye,” he says. “ And it’s no’ every girl that’ll mak’ hersel’ oot to be aulder nor she is. For instance, that hoosemaid I told ye aboot pretended she was jist seven and twinty.”

“ But hoo could ye tell that wasna her real age?” I asked him.

He dinna answer directly, and then Mrs. Parkins cam’ in, and somehow I could never put the question again.

It was awfu’ silly o’ me, but maybe it was the cheese puddin’ we had that night that done it, for when I gaed to ma bed I couldna sleep at first for wonderin’ aboot that hoosemaid.

Hooever, the mornin’ brought me something else to bother aboot in the shape o’ a letter. I didna ken the writin’, and

JUST JEMIMA

when I looked at the end I near drapped on the floor.

“What impiddence!” I says to mase’.
“I’ve a guid mind to burn it unread.”
Still, I didna dae that.

“DEAR JEMIMA:

“I have been wondering these fine evenings why you was never out for a walk for the good of your health, but now I have found out that the servants at ‘Sea-view’ cannot get out in the evenings because the boarders gets their big feed then, which is a shame altogether. But I hear you get out two afternoons a week, which is no use to me that is on duty till 6 P. M.; but I also hear that you have every second Sunday afternoon and evening, so I will look out for you on the road next Sunday. I will be very pleased to show you the finest scenery in this part of the British Isles, and you can have either chocolates or toffee to refresh you all the time. I know how to behave myself as well as any-

TWO STRINGS

body. Hoping to observe your sweet smile before it is many days older.

“ Yours resp.,

“ PETER TAGGART,

“ *Head Porter, Sunnyburn Station.*

“ P. S.—Beware!”

“ Weel,” thinks I, “ he seems to ha’e ta’en a heap o’ trouble to write a nice letter;” and I couldna but admire his neck in callin’ hissel’ “ head porter.”

Of course, he had nae business to put “ Jemima,” nor to bid me beware; otherwise it was a polite, respectable letter, and it would be bad manners no’ to answer it. But hoo to answer it was another story. If the cook had been onything forbye a cook, I might ha’e asked her advice; unfortunately, bein’ hard o’ hearin’, as she told Frederick, she had lost her interest in a’ worldly joys except eatin’ and sleepin’, and didna care if the Huns cam’ to “ Sea-view ” the morn’s mornin’.

Hooever, there was seldom time for

JUST JEMIMA

broodin' at "Seaview." On this particular afternoon, to Mrs. Parkins' satisfaction as weel as mines, a' the boarders went off to excurse theirsels on a steamboat, which meant a savin' in work and time, no' forgettin' afternoon tea. I was in the pantry, strivin' to get off by heart the long list o' the boarders' likes and dislikes, when Frederick drapped in.

"I thought ye was busy in the garden," says I, "along wi' Mr. Parkins."

"So I was," says he, "but the auld sleepy-head gaed into the tool-house to fetch a hoe, and there he's yet, snorin' like a pig. I'm due a rest onyway."

"The cook's ha'ein' a dish o' tea," I says. "Ye should jine her."

I noticed, no' for the first time, that he was lookin' wearied.

"I'm no' heedin' aboot tea, Jemima," he says, suddenly. "I wish ye would dae me a favour."

TWO STRINGS

I think it's Soloman that says: "When in doubt, hold your tongue." I merely took a squint oot o' the corner o' ma eye, and gaed on wi' ma study.

"Are ye daein' onything parteec'lar on Sunday evenin'?" he says at last.

I had to answer this time.

"Depends on what ye call parteec'lar," says I. I minded it was him that had took the letters frae the postie that mornin'.

"Ha'e ye an engagement?" he says.

"I promised ma fayther I would gang to the Kirk," I tells him.

"Ay; but after the Kirk."

Upon ma sam, I didna ken what to say. I thought o' mentionin' that the cook an' me was gaun oot to chase wilks, but he was lookin' that serious, I couldna manage it. So to bring the thing to a head I says carelesslike:—

"I suppose ye'll be comin' to the favour some o' these days."

JUST JEMIMA

“ I’m feart ye’ll no’ grant it,” says he.

Oh, dear, I couldna help feelin’ curious !

“ Jemima,” he says, after a while, “ I wish ye would come up and see ma mither on Sunday evenin’.”

I may as weel confess I was surprised; still, I canna say I was annoyed completely.

“ Does your mither ken about me?” I enquires.

“ Ay,” says he. “ She hopes ye’ll come.”

“ Then I’ll come,” says I, “ and thank her kindly.”

“ That’s fine!” he says, lookin’ as pleased as onything.

Jist then I was rung for, but I stopped to ask a question that had been in ma head ever since I first seen him lookin’ wearied.

“ I suppose ye wasna strong enough for the army,” I says as kind as I could.

TWO STRINGS

“A guid guess, Jemima,” says he, “but ye’d better no’ keep her waitin’.”

I gaed to ma bed as early as I could that night—at least I gaed to ma room. I was at ma wits’ end to think what to write to the porter. Ye see, I didna want to be ower frien’ly, and I didna want to hurt his feelin’s. At last I minded something I had read in a wee book ma sister had bought, after a fortune-teller had said she would likely marry a young duke—instead o’ the engineer o’ a steam-road roller. And this is what I wrote:—

“Miss J. Just regrets she has not the ability to accept Mr. P. Taggart’s kind invitation to a view of the scenery with toffee (or chocolates), as she has a priory engagement, but she thanks him all the same and trusts he is in the best of health.”

So I gaed to sleep at last wi’ a guid conscience which, as my fayther says, is worth

JUST JEMIMA

**a dozen hot-water bottles, thinkin' kindly
o' ma twa admirers, though neither o' them
was exactly heroes.**

V

THE ROSEBUD

IF I ha'ena said much about the boarders at "Seaview," it's no' because I ha'ena been thinkin' aboot them, ay, and observin' them. As ye ha'e maybe noticed, I'm o' a canny disposition, and I try to keep mind o' ma fayther's advice, never to judge folk frae their ootsides, nae matter hoo ill-favoured they are.

But at the end o' three weeks I must say what I think o' Col. Beetle, or burst. Oh, yon's no' a nice man! The other mornin', when me and Mrs. Parkins was makin' the beds, I says to her:—

"It's a pity the Colonel doesna treat his lady kinder. I wonder he doesna think shame o' hissel'."

"I hardly think it is any business of yours, Jemima," says Mrs. Parkins, but no' angrily.

JUST JEMIMA

“Maybe no’, mem,” I says; “but I canna help takin’ an interest in the folk stoppin’ in your hoose.”

“That is well enough,” she says. “Still, you are not expected to express opinions of them. I may tell you, however, that Colonel Beadle’s manner used to worry me a good deal, but after a while I came to the conclusion that he could not help it—it is only his way. You know, we all have our little peculiarities.”

“Ye’re ower tender, mem,” I tells her. “I believe ye would ha’e an excuse for a man that killed his granny for a shillin’.”

“Really, Jemima !” she exclaims.

“It’s no’ as if the Colonel was ill-natured to everybody,” I says. “He’s as sweet as treacle to the other ladies—and dear knows they’re far frae lovely.”

“That will do,” says she, takin’ oot her hanky and blawin’ her nose several times.

“I hope ye’re no’ catchin’ the flue,

THE ROSEBUD

mem," I says anxiously, but she didna answer, and I couldna get her on to the Colonel again, though I was keen to learn mair about the man.

The same day I speired at Frederick about him.

"I believe he was a fine sojer in his day," says Frederick.

'Ay, but what's your opinion o' him noo?" says I.

"I think he's no' a bad sort."

"Gracious heavens!" says I, "are ye blin' and deaf? Ha'e ye never noticed hoo he jumps on puir Mrs. Beetle?"

"Oh, ye'll soon get used to that, Jemima," he says carelesslike. "It's jist his way."

For about half a second I was speechless. Then I says, slow and solemn:—

"Did ye never feel like takin' him by the scruff o' the neck and shovin' his face in his soup?"

JUST JEMIMA

Frederick stared at me.

“ Or clappin’ the cheese puddin’ on his wicked auld head?” says I.

“ No,” says he, “ I never did! But if he’s said onything to offend *you*, Jemima ——”

I waved him awa’.

“ I’m disappointed in ye, and I ha’e nae mair to say on the subject.”

And I made him leave it at that.

At night, the cook bein’ in extra low spirits, owin’ to the boarders ha’ein’ devoured a’ the green peas but five, I took her oot for some fresh air jist afore bed-time—she hadna been oot o’ the hoose since she arrived—and we had a ten minutes’ stroll along the shore. Oh, me! I never understood till then why the sea waves was called sad. Betwixt broodin’ on the green peas and wishin’ she was in her bed, she wasna cheery company. I wanted to get *her* opinion o’ the Colonel,

THE ROSEBUD

but a' she would say was that she supposed he was nae wickeder nor other men, and that we a' had oor burdens to bear. So I changed the subject, enquirin' hoo she was enjoyin' oor adventure by the ocean.

“ Oh dear, oh dear,” says she, “ I think the niff o' the salt water doesna agree wi' me, and the sight o' them wilks and other creepin' things gi'es me a grue—and if I had only dreamt the greedy folk was gaun to shift a' the peas like that, I would ha'e kept back ma own portion. Come awa' hame, lassie, and we'll ha'e a cup o' cocoa afore we gang to oor beds, and try to forget the greed o' folk and the cauld air o' this place.”

I tell ye I was fair depressed when I cam' to say ma prayers that night. I could ha'e done fine wi' a sight o' the inside o' ma fayther's hoose. Hooever, I was a' right again in the mornin', and fit for onything.

At breakfast the Colonel was savager

JUST JEMIMA

nor ever, cryin' " fiddlesticks " and the like at everything his lady said. I think the others was annoyed at him, except, maybe, Miss Tinto, which let oot a giggle as if it was funny. The only thing I could dae was to see that he got the wee-est egg—I would ha'e gi'ed sixpence if it had been a rank bad yin—and keep shiftin' the marmalade, which he was daft for, to the other side o' the table.

Afterwards I told Frederick what I had done, but he said he couldna see that I had done onything that wouldna mak' the man crosser to his wife.

" And what would you ha'e done? " says I.

" Naething, " says he. " If I couldna appeal to his better nature, I would let him be. "

" I dinna believe he's got ony better nature; I would as soon look for that in a Hun, " says I.

THE ROSEBUD

“Weel, ye mightna look in vain, if ye gaed deep enough,” he says.

Somehow he angered me.

“What dae *you* ken about Huns?” I asks him. “Ye never was oot yonder.”

I was sorry the minute I said it.

He got red and turned awa’ frae me.

Later on, Mrs. Parkins sent me oot to the garden to gather roses for the table, and there I seen Mrs. Beetle sittin’ by hersel’ readin’ a book. She had her hanky oot, but whether it was for to wipe her eyes or her nose, or to frighten the flies, I couldna be sure. But, oh, I was vexed for her! What a cruel fate to be cemented for life to sich a savage character! And yet, nae doubt, there had been a day when he would ha’e stood on his head and eaten grass to win her cauldest smile! Oh, men, men!

It was then that I minded the words o’ Frederick aboot better natures. “What,”

JUST JEMIMA

says I to masel', "if Colonel Beetle has a bit left, after a'!" It's queer hoo one notion leads to another. As I pulled the beauteous roses, keepin' a sharp lookout for bumbees, etc., ma head got full o' them—notions, I mean—and when I gaed back to the hoose, I felt like cryin' "Eureka," that 'bein' the name o' the party which invented hot baths by accident in the days o' Julius Ceasar, or thereabouts, and got a stove polish called ever after him. Sich is fame!

The first chance I got, I apologised to Frederick for ma sharpness to him.

"It's merely a temporary apology," I says. "Maybe I'll ha'e to tak' it back, the morn's mornin'; but in the meantime I'm admittin' that ye might be right aboot Col. Beetle's better nature."

"My, ye're a comic, Jemima," says he. "What dae ye expect to happen the morn's morning?"

THE ROSEBUD

“Ha, ha!” says I, “wait and see!”

He wasna jist as curious as I could ha’e wished.

“Jemima,” he says, when I was for leavin’ him, “I’ve been ha’cin’ a word wi’ the cook.”

“Flirtin’ again!” I remarks.

He laughed.

“It appears that she doesna want to gang oot on Sunday evenin’, so there’s nae reason for you stoppin’ in, although it’s no’ your turn for gaun oot. Ma mither,” he says, seriouslike, “would be rael pleased to see ye.”

“But she seen me last Sunday,” says I. “She was extra kind, and I wouldna like her to get fed up wi’ me.”

“That’ll never happen!” he says. “Last Sunday done her a heap o’ guid. As ye ken, she’s been an invalid. Say ye’ll come, Jemima.”

I didna ken what to say. I had had an-

JUST JEMIMA

other note frae the porter, upbraidin' me for bein' stuck up and so forth, and tellin' hoo he had tramped the road in a new pair o' shoes for four immortal hours, hopin' for a sight o' ma sweet smile, but a' in vain. It said he had endured great agony o' mind and body, and though I didna believe that—the mind bit, at ony rate—I had nae special desire to hurt his feelin's, nor to let the chocolates rot, as he declared they would. Sweeties is no' that easy come by nooadays.

“I'll meet ye comin' oot o' the Kirk,” says Frederick.

“Na,” I says, “that would be ower pinte. If your mither really wants me, I'll come up an hour after that.”

“But ye dinna need to come back here for your supper,” he says. “That'll be waitin' for ye at oor hoose.”

I said it was vera kind o' his mither, but I really couldna come direct frae the Kirk.

THE ROSEBUD

I was feart he would start speirin' what for no', but he jist gi'ed a sort o' nod to hissel', and said I would be welcome when I cam'. He didna look offended; a' the same, I wasna entirely satisfied.

At night, when I made ma round o' turnin' doon the beds, I took a bonny wee rosebud wi' me. When I laid out the Colonel's pyjameses, which must ha'e made him look like a demented zebra, I slipped the rosebud into the pocket beside his hanky. At first I had meant for to put a note wi' it, sayin' "Wi' fondest love," but I didna ken Mrs. Beetle's front name, and I didna want to create a scandal wi' makin' him imagine it was maybe frae Miss Tinto. So I left the bud to speak for itsel', and gaed doonstairs tryin' to feel hopeful that it would mind him o' the balmy days when he courted his wife.

What wi' worryin' about this, and about

JUST JEMIMA

Frederick and the portèr, I didna enjoy ma usual repose, and the lark had a big start next mornin'. The cook had likewise slept in, after a bad dream aboot some haricot beans that turned into earwigs, and Mrs. Parkins had rose on her wrong side; so if it hadna been for Frederick, the boarders would ha'e had to whistle a while for their breakfasts. Hooever, we managed to provide it up to time, and doon they cam', maistly lookin' as if they hadna seen food for a fortnight.

The Colonel was late, though, and I was on the tenterhooks to see if the rosebud had worked. I couldna see ony difference in Mrs. Beetle, but it wasna to be expected that her face would become glad in a night after a' them years o' misery.

When the Colonel cam' doon at last, Frederick, which happened to be aside me at the sideboard, gi'ed me a nudge, but I hadna the courage to look then. And

THE ROSEBUD

when I did look, I felt like daein' a swoon
on the lino.

The Colonel's face was as black as thun-
der, and doon the side o' his big nose was a
long red scratch.

VI

SWEETS TO THE SWEETS

I HAD never dreamed I would live to see masel' keepin' appointments wi' twa separate young men on the same night, and if I hadna chanced to be born modest I might ha'e let masel' get puffed up wi' thinkin' on ma popularity. A' the same, I would as soon think o' refusin' a respectable compliment as I would a new laid egg, both o' which was scarce owin' to the war.

Like the girl in a story I had been readin', I lingered ower ma toilet that Sunday afternune. I was glad it was summer time, and I could wear ma pink frock, which was new laundried and sweet-smellin'. When I looked at masel' in the glass, I couldna but confess that I had

SWEETS TO THE SWEETS

seen uglier. I doubt ma fayther would ha'e had a word to say about vanity, especially as I was bound first for the Kirk, but I ken ma mither would ha'e smiled and smoothed him doon. Ma mither's bonny yet, though fat.

The cook wagged her head when she seen me gaun oot, and told me I would catch ma death o' cauld frae the sea air, and speired if I would tak' a cup o' double-strong cocoa to ma supper.

So I had to tell her I wouldna be in for ma supper, and left her throwin' up her hands and cryin': "Sirs, the day! In ma youth I aye was in for ma supper!"

I near said: "And ye look it!"—but she's no' a bad auld thing, and I had to thank her for an extra night oot.

I needna trouble ye wi' an account o' the sermon. I took a note o' the text so that I could report it to ma fayther; he aye likes to ken. I would say it was a vera guid ser-

JUST JEMIMA

mon on the whole, though rayther complicated for ma taste; the bits o' poetry in it was far frae catchy. Hooever, I'll admit I wasna an extra attentive listener that day; there was a young man in the gallery which behove hissel' rael badly, squintin' at me every minute and tryin' to catch ma eye, which I'm glad to say he didna manage often. Still, that wasna the only thing to worry me. I was feart I would find Frederick waitin' for me when the Kirk skailed. But after a', he wasna there. Somehow, I wasna as pleased as I fancied I would ha'e been. I would ha'e liked him to be there, but no' to see me. Aweel, as ma fayther says, "We canna expect Providence to oblige us both ways."

I strolled along the shore road till I cam' to the Sunnyburn road, appearin' to be interested in naething but the Firth o' Clyde, which was lookin' as nice as ever I seen it. Several young men favoured me

SWEETS TO THE SWEETS

wi' approvin' glances, which was not returned.

As I gaed up the Sunnyburn Road, I had a keek through the hedge o' the garden o' "Seaview," and spied the Colonel sittin' on a seat wi' Miss Tinto. I could ha'e heaved a turnip at the auld blighter! Even the scratch on his nose, which was still red, had failed to touch his faithless heart and turn his thoughts to love's young dream o' long ago! I put oot ma tongue at him, and went on ma way. But next minute, takin' another keek, I spied Mr. Parkins in the summer hoose, snoozin' as usual. "Miserable wretch!" I says to him ablow ma breath, "can ye no' think shame to live on your wife the way ye're daein'—loafin' aboot day after day, and lettin' her work like a slave? Oh, that a bumbee would sting that neb o' yours and mak' ye jump!"

I waited to see if ma prayer would be

JUST JEMIMA

granted, but evidently none o' the numerous bumbees was sick o' life, and at last I walked on, wonderin' if ma own fayther and mither was the only pair in the world to be happy though married. I never was as near vowin' to be single for a' eternity.

The Sunnyburn Road has fine high hedges, and it never runs straight for long. I was glad o' that, for it's embrassin' when ye catch sight o' a chap about a mile awa' on a straight, flat road. I believe it's worse for the chap, for girls is cleverer at pretendin' they're blin' and congealin' their feelin's; but the chap, as a rule, commences to smile and lifts his hat far ower early, and by the time he comes up to ye, he jist looks silly—and kens it, which causes him to look sillier.

But, to tell ye the truth, I didna recognise the porter when he cam' round a corner, till I noticed his game leg. He was sich a swell in a bright broon suit and a

SWEETS TO THE SWEETS

pink tie, and he had a new yellowish-green golfin' bonnet wi' a skep that would ha'e kept his feet dry if it had been rainin'.

I canna say that ma colour didna deepen slightly, like the girl's I had been readin' aboot, but a tomato would ha'e been a ghost alongside him. Still, he wasna so backward when it cam' to speakin'.

"It's yoursel' at last," says he. "I was fearin' I would ha'e to gi'e up hope—been up and doon this road a score o' times. 'Deed and I'm glad to see ye, Jemima! And hoo are ye keepin'?"

"Fairly weel, thank ye," I says, "and I'll be obliged if ye'll let go ma hand, no' to mention ma best glove."

He didna look so happy then, and he stood there as dumb as a telegraph pole.

After a while I says:—

"It's a fine evenin', and this is a bonny spot, but I ha'e nae notion o' becomin' rooted to it."

JUST JEMIMA

“ Will ye come for a walk? ” he says.

“ If I’m back here in half an hour. ”

“ Is that a’ ? ” he cries.

“ Three-quarters at the ootside. ”

We started to walk, but he was still lookin’ glum.

“ Hoo’s the railway? ” I asks, thinkin’ to cheer him.

“ Aw, dinna speak about the railway, ” he says. “ It’s nae job for a chap wi’ ambition. Hoo are ye gettin’ on at ‘ Sea-view ’? ”

“ Fine! ”

That seemed to surprise him.

“ Are ye no’ terrible hard wrought? ” he enquires.

“ I canna complain when the mistress works hard hersel’, ” says I.

“ And what about the boarders? Are they a’ in ill-health? ” he asks.

“ They’re a’ a bit daft, I think, but no’ unhealthy. ”

SWEETS TO THE SWEETS

“ Mad? ” he cries.

“ Ay, but no’ dangerous.”

He shook his head.

“ I doubt ye’ll no’ be stoppin’ another month.”

“ I couldna say.”

After that he was dumb till we cam’ to a seat on the roadside.

“ Ye’ll be needin’ a rest,” he says.

“ They’re braw shoes ye’ve got on,” I remarks.

“ Oh, criffens! ” says he, “ I’ll no’ deny they’re hurtin’ me.”

“ Then we’ll sit doon,” I says kindly.

“ I couldna bear to see a monkey sufferin’.”

“ Ye’ve a tender heart,” says he, gaun eagerly to the seat.

He sat that close I had to tell him to leave me room to grow. He shifted about an inch awa’, and groaned.

It wasna vera excitin’, and, to tell ye the

JUST JEMIMA

truth, I was wonderin' when I was gaun to see the colour o' his chocolates—no' that I'm greedy; only a promise is a promise, and I was gettin' hungry.

But there was nae word o' them or o' onything else. When he had groaned for about the tenth time, I says:—

“Is't your feet?”

“Oh, no!” says he. “It's no' ma feet, Jemima, though they're bad enough. Oh, dear!”

I didna like to speir what it was, but I couldna help wonderin' if he had devoured a' the chocolates afore ma arrival, and was noo troubled by mair nor his conscience.

“Na, it's no' ma feet,” he sighs again.

“Weel, that's a mercy,” says I.

F'or a while he sat like a statue glowerin' at the grass; then he says suddenly:—

“Jemima!”

SWEETS TO THE SWEETS

“What’s ado?” says I.

“I hope ye *believe* it’s no’ ma feet. Dae ye?”

I was gettin’ fed up, and I told him ma time had come.

“Oh, dinna gang,” he says, and took a grip o’ ma hand.

I pulled it frae him, sayin’:—

“Touch not, taste not, handle not,” and got up.

He cam’ after me, cryin’:—

“Dinna gang yet. I want to speak to ye.”

But I kept movin’.

“I ken the road back,” I says.

“Are ye offended?” he asks, wi’ a face like a fiddle. “Oh, Jemima, I never seen a girl I liked as weel as you!”

This was more excitin’, but I merely replies:—

“Cheer up! Ye’re young yet!”

“I’ve seen ye but the twicet,” says he, so

JUST JEMIMA

red I was vexed for him; “but it was—it was love at first sight.”

“Oh, help!” says I, and I doubt I was red masel’.

Jist then, wha should come up ahint us but the station master and his wife. I was glad to see them. I stuck close to them till we cam’ to “Seaview.” I waited in the garden till they was oot o’ sight, and then I made tracks for the cottage o’ Frederick’s mither.

She’s an extraor’nary kind woman, and I was glad to be in her hoose, though Frederick was awfu’ quiet that night. It was a nice supper, and he cracked about a heap o’ things, but I noticed, as I had done the other times, that neither o’ them ever said a word about the war. I can be discreet when I like, and I never mentioned it either.

Aweel, when it was time to gang, Frederick escorted me doon to “Seaview.” I’m

SWEETS TO THE SWEETS

no' sure that I wouldna ha'e told him wha's company I had been in that evenin', if he had speired—but he didna.

“I've been wonderin',” says he at last, “hoo the Colonel cam' by that mark on his nose. I canna think it was Mrs. Beadle.”

“Dae ye think it was me?” says I.

He gi'ed a bit laugh.

“I've a guid mind to tell ye, jist to prove ye was wrang about him ha'ein' a better nature,” I says.

And I told him. He was fair amused.

“Keep on tryin', Jemima,” he says. “Ye ha'ena proved onything except that roses ha'e thorns. Has he said onything to Mrs. Parkins?”

“Ay; he said he had got a pin in his pillow—the auld coward! She was upset, puir body.”

“He wasna a coward in his day,” says Frederick, “and maybe the falsehood has saved ye trouble, Jemima,”—and then

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we kept argufyin' till we cam' to "Sea-view."

I bid him a cauld guidnicht.

Inside I found the cook a' smiles, and at first I thought she was off her onion. But she made the cocoa in the ordinar' way, and gi'ed me a cup withoot ony nonsense.

Then she says:—

"What dae ye think? I've had an adventure this night!"

"An adventure!" says I. "Ha'e ye been doon at the wilks after a'?"

"Listen!" she says. "I was sittin' here, in this vera chair, aboot half past eight, thinkin' aboot ma health, and no' vera happy, when I heard a wee noise at the window. Bein' daylight, I wasna feart, and gaed ower and opened. There was naebody there, but a parcel was lyin' on the sill. On the paper was wrote: 'With fond love from a true admirer.' And in-

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side was a braw box o' chocolates! Was that no' a fine adventure?"

"'Deed, ay!" I says, feelin' kin' o' dizzy. "Was they nice ones?"

"Maistly scrumptious. Aboot a dozen was ower hard for me, but maybe your teeth'll manage them—eh?" And she gi'ed me them done up in a bit o' newspaper. "Noo I must get ma night's rest," she says, and gaed off, wi' her cocoa, to her room.

There is times when it's nae use sayin' onything.

VII

ROMANCE

ANOTHER month had rolled awa', and I was still at "Seaview." I had decided to stop until further notice. It wasna perfect, but it might ha'e been worse.

"You have a good deal to learn yet, Jemima," Mrs. Parkins said, when she raised ma wages, "but if you continue as willing and cheerful as you have been, I'll be glad to have you stay."

"Oh, I'll keep willin'," I says, "and cheery likewise, though I could dae wi' a few fresh mugs about the place ——"

"Mugs?" she cries.

"Faces, mem," I explains. "Though it's a compliment to 'Seaview' and yoursel', and doubtless guid business, I fancy

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ye whiles feels it wearisome to see nae-thing but the same auld faces devourin' their rations week after week, and ——”

“ You really must not discuss the guests, Jemima,” says she, but no' exactly stern-like. “ I am pleased that they should make long stays, and so you ought to be, for every change means some extra work.”

“ Oh, I'm no' heedin' aboot the work,” I says, “ as long as there's a bit fun noo and then. At first I thought Mr. Shark—Shard, I mean—had the makin's o' a comic, but noo I see it was jist his whiskers, and I've got used to them.”

“ You must learn to control your tongue,” she says. “ It is quite possible,” she adds, after blawin' her nose, “ that I may have a new guest or two presently.”

“ Hurray!” says I. “ Ony chance, mem, o' something in the juvenile line?”

“ I cannot say, Jemima.”

“ Aweel,” says I, “ we must hope for

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the best, and try to bear wi' them that's up in years."

"Quite so," says she. "And now you can tidy the dressing-table."

"Wi' pleasure," says I. "My! but the Colonel's a whale for pomade!"

She gaed oot o' the room then, and I was left alone wi' ma thoughts, which was assorted and maistly private.

The cook had decided to try another month at "Seaview." She had been different ever since she pinched ma chocolates. She gaed oot when she got the chance, and whiles I see her wanderin' on the shore as if she was waitin' for something to happen. I was rael anxious to get her to gang in for a bath wi' me, but she said she perferred a natural death. So there's nae danger o' an extra high tide in the meantime.

She wasna the only person in the hoose that had ta'en a sudden fancy to the shore.

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On fine afternoons I noticed that Miss Tinto would slip awa' through the shore gate as if she wanted to be by hersel', and afterwards I would see her walkin' along the sand, pretendin' to read a book o' poetry. I'm sure she was pretendin', for I had a keek at it when she left it in the drawin'-room, and I couldna mak' head or tail o' it. Jist trash!

The first time she gaed to the shore, she carried a funny wee chair that folded up, and the first time she sat on it, its hind legs gaed doon in the soft sand, and she done a rare back fall. It was really splendid! I was lookin' frae a bedroom window, and I laughed like to end masel'. If only sich things would happen every day, "Sea-view" would be cheery enough. But she never took the wee chair again.

Of course I had next to nae time for lookin' oot o' windows, and it was a while afore I discovered that Mr. Shark usually

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gaed along the shore to settle his lunch and gather marine rubbish. I wondered what the Colonel would say to this. He aye has a nap early in the afternoon.

One day, it bein' an afternoon off, I thought I would try the shore masel'! So, wi' a love story and a poke o' Pontefrat lozenges in ma bag, I sallied forth.

I gaed along to the rocks. There's fine bits o' dry sand amongst them, where ye can recline at your ease and imagine your wages is £50 a month. I lay doon and slipped five Pontefrats into ma mooth. Then I opened ma book.

But the scenery was really that attractive! The tide was oot, and the wet seaweeds wus shinin' in the sun like gold and silver. Ailsa Craig was fine and clear; I kept admirin' it, till, lo! and behold! I fell asleep.

When I cam' to masel' I heard voices which was kin' o' familiar. I rubbed ma

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eyes and keeked ower the rocks—and there was Miss Tinto and Mr. Shark! I jist as near as near let out a “Kee-hoy!”

They was standin’ close together, and what think ye he was holdin’ up for her to see?

A wilk! Fancy that!

Then I heard him sayin’ he was sorry he had left his knife at hame.

As ma fayther says, we should never pass an opportunity of daein’ a guid turn, even to a worm, and afore ye could wink I was on ma feet addressin’ Mr. Shark.

“Excuse me, sir,” I says, respectfullike, “I can lend ye a pin, if that’s what ye’re wantin’, but I would advise bilin’ the wilk first, though I doubt it’ll no’ provide a great feast for twa persons.”

Miss Tinto gi’ed a screech, but Mr. Shark bursted oot laughing.

“Why, it’s the little housemaid,” says he.

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“Hoose-tablemaid, if ye please, sir,” says I.

“Jemima, in fact,” says he, still laughing, though Miss Tinto glowered at me.

“Jist Jemima,” I replies, “and if ye like, sir, I’ll be glad to gather a pint or twa, and I’m sure Mrs. Parkins would be pleased to gi’e ye a wilk course to your dinner. It’ll no’ be a great spread this evenin’, I may tell you.”

“A winkle course—what do you say to that, Miss Tinto?” he cries, in fits.

“Oh, horrors!” says she. “I’m sure we should all be poisoned.”

“Nae fear o’ that, mem,” I tells her. “I grant ye, in Glasgow, ye might chance on a wilk that wasna jist the thing, but here they’re bound to be the purest o’ the pure.”

At that she gi’ed a wee smile, and speired hoo I was likin’ ma situation; and

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then Mr. Shark speired if I took ony interest in zoology. I said I was afraid I was keener on the Zoo than the Ology, but I was aye ready to learn.

“Well, Jemima,” says he, “when you appeared, I was about to tell Miss Tinto something about the life of this little creature, and if you think you would be interested, I’m sure Miss Tinto would have no objections to your listening, too.”

He gi’ed Miss Tinto a look, and she says quite kindly:—

“Come over here, Jemima, and hear what Mr. Shard has to say.”

I thanked her and stepped ower, expectin’ to hear a dry discourse, and wishin’ I had bided in ma corner, wi’ ma love-story and Pontefrats.

But I was wrong. Afore he had been speakin’ for twa minutes, I was as keen as mustard. What that man didna ken about wilks wasna worth the kennin’, and the

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way he explained it a' was a fair treat. Ye would ha'e said he had been brought up wi' wilks; he couldna ha'e been mair familiar wi' his own brithers and sisters. He kent every bane in the wilk's body, every tooth in its head, what it liked to eat, hoo it stuck to the rock, and so forth. And noo and then he cracked a joke aboot its little ways. Oh, he was great! I canna say that Miss Tinto was as interested as masel'—she's no' very quick at the uptak'; but she done her best to look happy. I felt like runnin' hame and writin' a book called: "A Wilk's Bography."

I told Mr. Shark I was terrible obliged, and offered him ma Pontefrats. He took one wi' a smile, but Miss Tinto shook her head, though she smiled likewise. Then in case I might be spilin' a mild flirtation, I gi'ed them a kind fareweel and gaed back to ma corner and ma book.

But I couldna settle to read. Ma brain

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was fu' o' wilks—or, at least, thoughts about them. I wondered if Mr. Shark kent likewise aboot cockles and mussels and limpets and other dwellers in the deep, and if he would ever be likely to tell me about them. “Hoo marvellous is the works o' Nature!” I says to masel', as I put five Pontefrats in ma mooth, “and what intellects that man has congealed by his whiskers!”

Next mornin', whilst Mrs. Parkins was assistin' me to mak' the beds, I says to her:—

“Would ye say there was ony chance, mem, o' Mr. Shard and Miss Tinto makin' a match o' it?”

—“Good Heavens!” she exclaims, “what nonsense is this, Jemima?”

“Oh, jist one o' ma silly notions, I suppose,” I says humblelike. “Of course I can see that a marriage wouldna be guid business for 'Seaview,' mem.”

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“ Really! ” says she, a wee bit angry-like.

“ But for a’ that, mem, ” I says, “ I’m sure ye would never seek to stand in the way o’ sich bliss. ”

“ You absurd girl! ” says she, and thumps at the bolster. “ I shall be proud to see any marriage arranged in my house. It would give ‘ Seaview ’ quite a reputation. ”

“ Bless me, ” says I, “ I never thought o’ it that way! Can ye no’ work it? I’ll help ye a’ I can. ”

I hadna fancied she could laugh as she done then.

“ No, no, Jemima, ” she says at last, “ one must not interfere in such matters. But what reason can you have for coupling the names of my two guests? ”

“ Nae reason, mem; only a notion, ” I tells her. Then I speirs: “ Would it be a guid match, think ye? ”

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She seemed to be considerin' afore she answered.

"Perhaps it would," she says. "They are both pretty much alone in the world, I believe. He has learning and she has some wealth, and they must be about the same age."

"Fine!" says I, gi'ein' a pillow a bash that near bursted it.

"Come, come," says she, "this will never do! You have an abominable way, Jemima, of leading me on to discuss my guests. It must not occur again. Do you hear?"

"Ay, mem."

I was disappointed, but no' entirely cast doon. I had a crack wi' Frederick when he was assistin' me to wash up, that night, and though he wasna vera encouragin', he didna laugh at me. Frederick's unco nice that way: maist chaps aye laugh at the wrong time. I didna mention it to the

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cook. She could dae wi' a man for hersel', but she couldna be romantic about other folk.

I made up ma mind to never spy on Mr. Shark and Miss Tinto; but I didna promise to keep ma eyes shut every time they was within sight.

When I cam' to say my prayers that night, I apologised for ever ha'ein' ill thoughts o' him and her, and minded my fayther's saying against judgin' folk frae their ootsides. Still, it seemed a pity that she should be sae green regardin' a bad man like the Colonel, and that he should disfigure hissel' wi' thon whiskers.

But, oh, what fun, thinks I, turnin' on ma side to sleep, if the weddin' comes off at "Seaview"! And I hoped that Mrs. Parkins would mak' a fine bit o' profit off the purveyin'. And frae that I began to imagine masel' settin' oot the tables wi' guid things—hams and bacons, and sal-

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mons and cods, and beefs and muttuns,
and peas and greens, and soups both thick
and thin, and trifles and creams and jeelies
and jams and rolies and tarts and sliders
and figs and pineapples ——

Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I didna sleep weel
that night!

VIII

A COLD SNAP

FOR about a week in July there was a heat wave at Westerbay, which naebody enjoyed except the Colonel and the cook, but after that the weather seemed every day to get caulder and caulder, till everybody was complainin'. The nights was especially refrigeratin', and the Colonel could speak o' naething at breakfast but this vile Scotch climate. Mrs. Pagan, though she had plenty o' fat, would shudder like a naspen leaf every time a door was opened. Miss Tinto caught a cauld in her head, and twa days later Mr. Shark caught a ditto, which made me feel mair hopeful for their future happiness, and wonder when and where the chased salute had took place.

Ye're no' to imagine that Mrs. Parkins

A COLD SNAP

grudged the blankets, but unfortunately a' the spare ones was awa' at the washin', and there was a strike on at the laundry. Troubles never comes single, and if ye get off wi' twa at a time ye're gey lucky.

"Oh, this will never do," she cries one mornin' when we cam' on a great big but-ton in Mr. Shark's bed.

"High time he was gettin' wed, when his buttons is drappin' off like that," I re-marks.

"Be quiet," says she. "Don't you see that he has been sleeping in his ulster?"

"As long as he doesna tear up the car-pet, I dinna see hoo we can interfere, mem," says I.

But she had nae use for fun that mornin'. A' at once she says:—

"Have you seen the pigs since you came, Jemima?"

"No, mem," I answers, "nor heard them, either."

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“ Then in case I should forget, I’ll show you at once where to find them. Come along,” says she, and took me doonstairs to the pantry.

There she opened a wee door that I had thought was locked.

My! Ye never seen onything so tasty—a row o’ big-sized hot-water bottles, each wi’ a braw flannel coat; blue, pink, rolled-gold, and so on! The colours, she explained, was to show the bedrooms the pigs belonged to. I couldna help expressin’ ma admiration.

“ To-night, between nine-thirty and ten,” she says, “ you must provide one for each guest. Tell cook, in good time, to have plenty of boiling water ready.”

“ Depend on me, mem,” says I. “ Dae ye want me to gi’e the guests a hint about the joys in store for them? I could easy whisper it when I’m serving the macaroni.”

A COLD SNAP

“Certainly not!” says she.

“Weel, weel, maybe ye’re right, mem. It’ll be a pleasant surprise—pigs in the middle of July!”

“That will do. Run away now and finish your work upstairs.”

I respectfully sloped.

When next I entered the pantry, the cook was there, glowerin’ at the pigs and groanin’ to hersel’.

“Oh, dear! Oh, dear!” she says. “What rapture to be lyin’ in bed surrounded by them a’!”

I told her Mrs. Parkins’s orders.

“So ye canna ha’e your rapture to-night,” I says. “But are nae pigs provided for us ones?” I speirs.

“Only twa.”

“Weel, I’ll be content wi’ half o’ that,” I says.

“Oh, lassie,” she says, “ma circulation’s that bad, I’ve been usin’ the twa since

JUST JEMIMA

ever I cam' here! Could ye no' do without?"

"Ye're a greedy thing!" I tells her. "Come on—fair divide!"

"Aw," says she, "a young strong lass like you doesna need a pig. It'll warm ye jist to think hoo cosy your kindness is makin' me, eh?"

"Na, na. I'll tak' ma ration, thank ye," I says.

"I'll tell ye what I'll dae," she says, after thinkin' a while. "I'll gi'e ye an extra cup o' cocoa, double strong, to-night, if ye'll let me keep the twa."

"Oh, I'm fed up wi' cocoa," I says languidly, like the love-sick girl in the story I was readin', when her intended (which she hated) brought her a diamond necklace.

At that cook gaed awa' in a huff, but afterwards she cam' and offered me sixpence for the use o' ma pig.

A COLD SNAP

“ Per night,” says I.

“ What? ” says she.

“ Payable in advance,” says I. “ I’ll accept three shillin’s for the week.”

She gaed awa’ again and didna speak to me for the rest o’ the day.

She made an awfu’ mess o’ the dinner that night, and fair affronted Mrs. Parkins. The soup, which the programme said was “ Bohemian Cream,” or something like that, was luke-warm and the colour o’ clay, and the Colonel said he preferred biled sawdust. The filleted fish wasna half fried and was fu’ o’ banes, and the sauce that should ha’e gaed wi’ it was singed and as thick and sticky as gundy. It wasna a meatless day, worse luck, as the Colonel remarked, and the beef and turnips was underdone; but the potatoes was guid, only there wasna enough o’ them. She seemed to ha’e forgot to stir the puddin’, for Mr. Parkins hissel’ got a moothfu’

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o' cloves, which caused him to choke, and he had to dae a bunk frae the room.

Mrs. Pagan kept on makin' faces and mutterin' "horrible, disgraceful!" but she got outside her rations without fail, and as soon as she was finished she made tracks for the drawin'-room and nabbed the biggest chair nearest the fire. As for Mr. Shark and Miss Tinto, they was that bad wi' the cauld, I dinna suppose they could ha'e tasted ony difference betwixt cinders and soap-suds. As ma fayther would say: "Hoo often dae we discover blessin's in oor afflictions."

A' the same, they looked unco miserable, and their coughin' and sneezin' was terrible to hear. The Colonel kept tellin' them they had caught the Turkish Influenza for certain. I could ha'e cuffed the auld blighter's ears to him—I could that! And they was that brave, puir things, tryin' to look as if they was quite happy.

A COLD SNAP

But their smiles near made ma heart bleed; they reminded me o' sour apples and raw onions mixed wi' ammonicated quinine—the stuff ye tak' for to check a cauld in the head when it's ower late. Oh, I was vexed for the semi-devoted pair, and I wished Mrs. Parkins had let me drap a hint concernin' the pigs. I was that sure it would comfort them, I couldna get the notion oot o' ma mind.

I fully expected that Mrs. Parkins would gi'e the cook warnin' after dinner, but she didna. Only she made the coffee hersel', and I served it in the Lounge, which was jist the front hall wi' a wee room added on. I forgot to say that Frederick had got the day off—I couldna help wonderin' what for—so I couldna consult him aboot the pigs.

Mr. Shark and Miss Tinto was sittin' by theirsels, him toyin' wi' a cigarette, and her tryin' in vain to smell a red rose, which

JUST JEMIMA

I trusted was a gauge o' love. When I presented them wi' their coffees, I simply couldna keep the joyful news to masel', and I whispers to them both, respectful-like:—

“ Keep up yer hearts. Ye're gaun to get pigs in your beds this night! ”

I didna wait to see the effect o' ma words, except that Mr. Shark dropped his cigarette into his coffee, and Miss Tinto let oot a wee quack, but I felt they would ha'e one cheery subject to talk aboot for the rest o' the evenin'!

Ah, me! If I could only ha'e foreseen what was comin'!

The cook was still huffy and wouldna help me, so it was late afore I was through wi' the washin' up. I suppose the gentry never thinks to coont up the number o' dishes they dirty in a day. At “ Seaview ” me and Frederick worked it oot at twinty-eight dishes, wi' twinty-six knives, forks

A COLD SNAP

and spoons per fathead, and that was leavin' oot what ye might call the public dishes, sich as tureens, ashets, etc.

When I got back to the kitchen, the cook was at the fireside, waitin' for the three kettles to bile and cryin' like fun. It seemed she had a conscience, after a'.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" she cries. "I disgraced masel' ower that dinner the night, and I'll never feel the same again."

"Cheer up!" says I, for I couldna but be vexed for her. "It was jist a side slip. Ye'll gi'e us an extra fine dinner the morn's night, cooky, eh?"

"If I'm spared," she groans.

"Oh, ye'll no' likely be come for afore then," says I.

"I'll maybe perish wi' the cauld," says she, wi' her apron to her tears.

"Ye'll no' dae that either," I tells her, "for ye can ha'e both the pigs, and welcome. I was jokin' afore."

JUST JEMIMA

At that she jump up and hugged me.

“Heaven’ll reward ye,” she says. “And I hope ye’ll excuse me for ha’ein’ them both in ma bed at this vera instant, but, of course, I intended for to ——”

“That’s a’ right,” says I, bein’ ower sleepy to listen to a long story. “Come on, and we’ll get ready the lodgers’ lot.”

The same lot was standin’ on the table, a’ in their braw wee coats.

“We’ll tak’ off the jaykets noo, and turn them inside oot,” says she, “and they can be toastin’ till the pigs is filled.”

It wasna till we had stripped the lot that we noticed a queer thing. Every pig was wantin’ a stopper. We got the others frae the press, and they was ditto.

“I’ll ha’e to see Mrs. Parkins aboot this,” I says, and in a wee while I had her in the kitchen.

She was dumbfounded. I was turnin’

A COLD SNAP

the coats inside oot when I cam' on a piece o' writin'. It said:—

“ I told you I would have revenge.”

Mrs. Parkins turned red when she seen it.

“ That wicked girl I had to dismiss in the spring,” she says to hersel', and I thought she was gaun to flare up, but she jist hove a sigh and remarks, “ Corks.”

But there wasna a cork in the hoose that would fit.

“ It's absolutely necessary,” she says, “ that Mr. Shard and Miss Tinto have bottles to-night. They have fearful colds. Get me the two bottles belonging to the kitchen.”

Ye could ha'e heard a safety pin drap.

“ Come, Jemima,” she says, “ waken up and fetch them quickly.”

Then the cook done what I thought was a noble deed.

JUST JEMIMA

“ I’ll fetch them, mem,” she says, “ though they happen at this vera instant to be warmin’ ma own bed.” And without waitin’ for a reply she gaed and fetched them.

“ I’m sorry to deprive you,” says Mrs. Parkins, as if she was tryin’ to forget the rotten dinner. Then she turned to me, say- ing: “ Get them filled and put in the beds as soon as possible, Jemima.”

I was greatly relieved at bein’ able to keep ma promise to the unfortunate pair. What a disappointment if they had gaed joyful to their beds and found them pig- less, after a’! I could never ha’e looked at them in the faces again.

I was gettin’ into ma own bed, half an hour later, when I minded I had left ma alarum clock in the kitchen for to put it at the right time. So far frae willin’ly I slipped oot o’ ma room and gaed softly along the passage. To ma surprise, there

A COLD SNAP

was a light in the kitchen. The door was near shut, but I could see in.

And there was the cook smilin' like fun—busy screwin' the stoppers into seven steamin' pigs.

Upon ma sam, I couldna help thinkin' she deserved her rapture.

IX

A RIFT

THE next day was a heap warmer. Mr. Parkins was snoozin' in the tool-shed, and Frederick was, as usual, daein' the auld sluggard's work in the garden, when I gaed oot to get some parsley for the cook. As Frederick says, there's parsley and parsley, and it tak's a long experience to ken the best; so he cam' ower to help me. It was his first chance o' a word wi' me that day.

“I hope ye enjoyed yoursel' yesterday,” I remarks in a politelike tone o' voice.

“Oh, weel enough,” says he. “I wasna oot for fun, Jemima. Feels as if we was gaun to get some heat noo.”

“High time!” I says. “Did ye stop at hame?”

A RIFT

“ I had to gang to the town,” says he, pickin’ at the parsley.

“ Ye’ll ha’e frien’s there, I suppose? ”

Mind ye! I wasna the least curious; I was merely wonderin’.

“ Naebody special,” says he. “ Ma mither hopes ye’ll be up on Sunday.”

“ I’m obliged to her,” says I, but I dinna say whether I would gang or no’. Of course, the man was welcome to keep his secret, whatever it was; it was nae business o’ mines.

He passed me a bunch sayin’:—

“ Ye’re no’ to tell ma mither, Jemima; but yesterday I was seein’ the doctor.”

“ Oh,” says I, and it was a’ I could say jist then. For he had tell’t me o’ the trouble aboot his heart, which had kept him frae servin’ his country and frae daein’ ony heavy labour, and stopped him frae the engineerin’, his proper trade.

“ I’m a heap better,” says he.

JUST JEMIMA

“ I’m glad,” says I. “ But is your mither no’ to ken that? ”

“ Best no’—till she’s a wee bit stronger, onyway,” he says. “ Ye see she might live in fear o’ me bein’ called up. But I’m maybe no’ fit for that yet, Jemima.”

“ Alec,” says I, and his real name was oot afore I kent. “ Oh, surely ye’ll never be fit! ”

“ I’ve a fair chance, the doctor tell’t me. That was nice o’ ye, Jemima,” he says.

“ I didna—weel, maybe I did mean it for once,” says I. “ But dae ye want to gang? ”

He gi’ed a wee laugh, sayin’:—

“ What dae ye think? ”

And jist then the cook cried that the blue room was ringin’. Later on Frederick didna seem anxious to speak aboot hissel’, and as I’ve said already, I’m no’ curious. Still, I was kin’ o’ puzzled.

A RIFT

Maybe I should explain that I had been at his mither's hoose every Sunday since I cam' to Westerbay, for the cook had soon lost the hope o' an admirer, and didna like to miss her supper at the usual time; and as the boarders got a cauld supper on Sundays, she had nae objection to me takin' her share o' fresh air. Ma parents was pleased to think I had a nice hoose to gang to, and I canna deny that I was pleased masel', so I had nae intention o' makin' ony change; but, of course, I didna want Frederick to imagine he was ony attraction.

I may as weel likewise explain that I continued to favour the porter for half an hour betwixt leavin' the Kirk and gaun to the cottage. I daresay ma fayther would ha'e wanted to ken a hundred and fifty things aboot the porter, but I had described him to ma mither as a respectable young man wi' an honest face and a game

JUST JEMIMA

leg, and I daresay that satisfied her—and, as a rule, she can satisfy ma fayther in the long run.

I canna jist say what made me keep on meetin' the porter on the Sunnyburn Road. It wasna his sweeties, though he was free wi' them, and it wasna his conversation, for he was dumber every time we met, till he seemed to ha'e lost ony fun he ever had. I think it was partly ma soft heart, for I wouldna willin'ly hurt the feelin's o' an earwig, and partly ma pride, for I wouldna ha'e Frederick fancy hisselt' the only chap in the wide world. But for a' that, mind ye, I liked the porter no' so bad.

Still, I had near made up ma mind to keep awa' frae the Sunnyburn Road that Sunday, when the Saturday evenin' post brought me a letter implorin' me to meet him, because he had something terrible important to tell me.

A RIFT

“ I’ll admit I was kin’ o’ excited when I seen him approachin’, but I needna ha’e been that. When ten minutes had passed awa’, he had told me naething except that the railway was rotten, the turnips was wantin’ rain, and he had left the jujubes on the mantelpiece.

“ Weel, weel,” says I, “ the world still rolls on, and we still get oor rations, and I observe your shoes is a heap easier.”

“ What does onything matter,” says he, “ if your heart’s bein’ broke? ”

“ Keep up your heart, and it’ll no’ get broke,” I says, inspectin’ ma umbrella, which was oot for the first time. Ma sister had got twa for weddin’ presents, and had sent me the second best. But he done nae-thing but groaned and sighed till we cam’ to the usual seat. And then he sighed and groaned.

“ Cheer up, for ony favour,” says I.

“ I canna,” says he.

JUST JEMIMA

“ Be a man, Peter! ”

“ I wish I was a corp. ”

After a long while he says:—

“ Jemima! ”

“ Present! ” says I.

“ What way did ye no’ beware o’ the boots? ”

“ I bewore till I couldna see ony reason for bewarin’. What ha’e ye got against him? ”

“ Ye’re unco frien’ly wi’ him noo,” he says.

“ That’s no’ answerin’ ma question. ”

“ I suppose ye’ll be for his hoose shortly,” he says.

“ His mither’s hoose, ye mean,” says I, wi’ a cock o’ me nose.

“ Weel, I didna mean to offend ye, Jemima,” he says humblelike. “ I’ve naething against the man—I only ken him by sight—except that he’s a boots. ”

“ Mercy! ” says I, “ and, if ye please,

A RIFT

what's the difference betwixt a boots and a porter?"

"Porters is usually higher minded nor bootses," he says, as solemn as a stuffed owl. "Think o' the thousands o' lives that's dependin' daily on us porters! What lives is dependin' on bootses? Tell me that?"

"Dinna haver!" says I, laughin'. "Ye're speakin' as if ye was an engine-driver or a signalman."

"I'm speakin' as a plain porter, Jemima," says he. "What would happen if us porters didna see that the carriage doors was proper shut—whiles at the risk o' oor own necks? Why, the lines would be strewed wi' damaged passengers, and return tickets would be unsaleable!"

He had me there, and I admitted it.

"But that doesna prove that bootses is lower minded."

JUST JEMIMA

He looked at me as if he was gaun to cry.

“Are ye attached to this boots?” he says o’ a sudden.

“Am I what?”

“Are ye engaged to him?”

“Dinna be a goat!” I says. “Ye ken I’m far ower young to be engaged to onybody.”

He wagged his head.

“A girl cannot be ower young to be engaged to the right man, Jemima.” And he got hold o’ ma hand. “Let me press it,” says he, wi’ a groan.

“No’ likely!” says I, strivin’ to draw it frae him.

“Let me hold it then without pressin’ it.”

“Oh, gracious me!” I says. “Behave yoursel’! Ye’re hurtin’ ma fingers; ye’ve near dislocated ma pinkie, ye muckle elephant!”

A RIFT

And I won free.

“I’m no’ an elephant,” says he kin’ o’ angry. “I’m a human bein’ wi’ an honest heart which is bein’ broke. But I’ll tell ye something.”

“It’ll ha’e to keep till the next time, if ony,” says I. “I’m for off.”

“And you’re gaun to his hoose to your doom!” he cries.

“I’m gaun to ma supper, and I’ve a rare appetite,” I tells him. “If ye winna leave go ma umbrella, I’ll leave it wi’ ye!”

“Wait!” he says. “Listen! I must put ye on your guard. I was at the town yesterday—the boss sent me wi’ a message to the Bank—and what think ye I seen?”

“The Bank, I hope!”

“I seen that boots in his Sabbath best, mashin’ a girl, a Red Cross Nurse, mind ye, and takin’ her into a tea-room for tea!”

“Are ye sure it wasna cocoa?” I says.

JUST JEMIMA

I was gaun to gi'e a laugh, but something seemed to gae wrang wi' the works.

"Tea or cocoa, I wouldna trust him if I was you."

"Wha told ye I was trustin' him?"

"Your face," he says, wi' a groan.

"Your face tells me everything, Jemima."

I was that angry I could ha'e cuffed his ears.

"Are ye gaun to leave go ma umbrella?"

He didna seem to hear.

"Ay, ye've a bonny face," he says, "but your heart's caulder nor a pre-war slider."

"Ma umbrella!" says I.

Nae answer, so I marched off without it.

I hadna got far when he was after me, cryin':—

"Jemima, here's your umbrella."

I walked quicker, payin' nae attention.

He was near up on me when we seen a lot o' folk comin'.

"Dinna run," he says.

A RIFT

“ I will,” says I. “ And it’ll be a fine sight—a man chasin’ a girl wi’ an umbrella.”

“ Tak’ it, for ony favour!” he says.

“ I never want to touch it again!” says I, and started to sort o’ run.

To ma surprise he turned aboot and walked off.

I plucked a dandelion to ha’e something to gaze at when passin’ the folk.

I wasna fashin’ masel’ aboot the umbrella till I noticed the sky. In aboot three minutes it was rainin’ like fun, and I was like a drooned rat when I got to the cottage.

“ Ha’e ye nae umbrella, dearie?” his mither speired, when she was daein’ her best for me at the fireside.

What could I dae but jist shake ma head? Later on Frederick speired the same question, and got the same answer. He was cheerier nor I had seen him for a

JUST JEMIMA

while, and so was his mither, and I wondered if he had told her about the doctor, after a'. Hooever, whether he was to be trusted or no', his was a nice hoose to be in that night.

It was still rainin' when the time cam' for me to gang. Frederick got oot a great big auld-fashioned umbrella and held it ower me. The road doon frae the cottage was lumpy, and after a while he says:—

“We might get on better if ye would think to tak' ma arm, Jemima.”

“I think we'll get on best without ony nonsense,” says I. And though he deserved it, I was kin' o' vexed at masel' for sayin' it.

“As ye please,” he says in that quiet voice of his that can mak' ye feel like dirt.

Seein' that he was never keen on speakin' about the “Seaview” folk oot-side the hoose, there was little crack durin' the rest o' the journey.

A RIFT

I was for gaun straight to ma bed, but the cook met me in the passage and dragged me into the kitchen.

“ I would ha’e gi’ed five shillin’s to ha’e had ye hame half an hour earlier,” she cries.

“ What for?” says I.

“ To let me get oot,” she answers, as red as a rasp.

“ Oot!” says I. “ Are ye for committin’ suicide?”

“ Na! To begin to enjoy life,” says she. “ Oh, me! What an adventure!”

I sat doon and looked at her.

“ I suppose ye’re harmless,” I says in a wearied voice.

She jist laughed like a hen, and pulled oot a bit o’ paper. “ Listen!” says she, and reads, like it was a text, these words:—

“ ‘ How can ye be so unkind to your faithful admirer?’ ”

“ Let’s see the writin’,” says I.

JUST JEMIMA

But she pulled it awa'.

"D'ye mind the chocolates I got at the window?" she says.

"Ha'e ye got anither box?" I speirs, and I couldna help sittin' up.

"What dae ye think?" says she. "My! I wish ye had cam' hame earlier. I might ha'e discovered him."

"I'll bet it's jujubes ye've gotten this time," I says, feelin' sick.

"Jujubes! What put jujubes into your head? Na, na, he's got past the sweetie stage," she says proodly, "and he chapped at the door this time! See!" she cries, runnin' to the dresser. "Did ever ye see a brawer umbrella?"

X

A FLORAL TRIBUTE

IT'S a queer thing, but me and Mrs. Parkins has oor best cracks whilst her and me is makin' the beds. Heavin' at mattresses—we turn them daily, mind ye!—and punchin' bolsters in concert wi' masel' seems to bring her off her high horse *pro tem*. Of course, noo and then, she bids me hold ma tongue, but it's jist like a mither tellin' her bairn to sit still and behave, which nae mither, except she's mad, ever expects her bairn to dae.

“So we're gaun to lose Mrs. Pagan,” I remarks, one Saturday mornin', as we was spreadin' lovely fresh sheets for the auld whale to snore on.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Parkins, “she is leavin' on Monday morning.”

“Monday mornin'!” says I.

JUST JEMIMA

“ Well, what’s wrong with Monday morning?” says she.

“ It would ha’e been mair Christian-like,” I says, “ for her to ha’e went yesterday, or waited till next Friday. She must ken by this time that the beds gets clean linen on Saturdays.”

“ Nonsense!” says Mrs. Parkins. “ Such an idea would never strike Mrs. Pagan, or any other guest.”

“ Weel, I wouldna gi’e ony o’ them clean sheets, unless I was sure it was for the week. Ye’re ower generous, mem,” I says, meanin’ it.

“ Fiddlesticks!” says she.

“ That may be,” says I. “ But I doubt, mem, ye wasna born under a lucky star.”

“ Possibly not, Jemima,” she says, wi’ a sad wee smile.

“ Still,” says I, no’ wantin’ to depress her, “ we must look on the bright side, and

A FLORAL TRIBUTE

I daresay Mrs. Pagan's room'll be aboot as profitable as her company, for never in a' ma born days ha'e I beheld sich an eater!"

"That will do, Jemima!" she says, jist as I expected she would. So I sang dumb for twa-three minutes, and then I says respectfullike:—

"Nae doubt, mem, we'll be seein' some new guests blaw in afore long, the season noo bein' at its zero!"

"I imagine you mean zenith!" she says. "Yes, we shall have a full house presently. I am expecting a lady and gentleman on Tuesday—a Mr. and Mrs. Pabbity, from London."

"Excuse me," says I, "but what did ye say was the name o' the parties?"

"Pabbity," says she. "An odd name, Jemima, so you had better get used to it."

"If the parties is onything like it, 'Sea-

JUST JEMIMA

view' is in for some fun. They wouldna mention their ages, I suppose, mem?"

"I fancy they are young people—on their honeymoon," she says, wi' a smile.

I was that surprised wi' delight, ye could ha'e knocked me doon wi' a hair-pin.

"That'll be a grand shake-up for 'Sea-view,'" I says, "and what a splendid example for Miss Tinto and Mr. Shark—Shard, I mean! He hasna been as eager lately as I could wish—been ower took up wi' his wilks, etcetera."

"Jemima," she says, "you must stop couplung the names of my guests. I may tell you that Mr. Shard is writing a book on shell-fish."

"Oh, he's a warrior!" says I. "I suppose he'll be callin' it 'Wonders o' the Deep,' though it's that shallow on this shore ye've got to wade a mile to get your knees wet. D'ye think, mem, he would

A FLORAL TRIBUTE

like to ha'e ma mither's recipe for stewed cockles?"

"I'm afraid it's going to be a purely scientific book," she says.

"Weel, weel," says I, "it's queer what some o' us has got to dae for a livin'. Hooever, it'll be fine to ha'e Mr. and Mrs.—what did ye say the name was, mem? Oh, ay—Pabbity! Sounds like a cahootchy beast that squeaks if ye strike it on the nose."

"I trust you won't do anything of that sort, Jemima," she says. She was in a rare guid humour that mornin'.

"Nae danger o' that, mem," says I. "But what price a nice bunch o' flowers to be presented to the blushin' bride on her arrival at the doorstep?"

I'm sorry to say Mrs. Parkins didna seem to approve o' the notion; she feared it would cause Mrs. Pabbity an embarrassment.

JUST JEMIMA

Of course I told Frederick what was comin', but he didna seem greatly interested.

"I'd be gladder to see them," says he, "if I kent they had wooden legs. I've got fair fed up wi' cleanin' boots and shoes since your frien' Mr. Shark took to gettin' his feet wet three or four times a day. I had enough wi' the Colonel changin' his boots after every meal to help his digestion. Na, na, Jemima, this is nae job for a man."

I was astonished.

"I never heard ye complain afore," I says. "Are ye no' weel?"

"I'm ower fit!" cries he. "But we'll say nae mair aboot it," he says in a hurry. "I'm vexed I let ma ill-temper get the better o' me, Jemima. And what did ye say was the name o' the happy pair? Rabbits?"

"Ye're no' far off it," says I, and tells

A FLORAL TRIBUTE

him o' ma notion o' the bouquet for the bride.

"Wi' lots o' pepper in it, I suppose!" he says, laughin'.

"Ye're a nasty, mean thing!" I tells him. "Can ye no' think hoo romantic it'll be to ha'e a young couple in the hoose?"

"Wait till ye've gathered up the confetti in their room," he says. "We had a couple here in the spring, and the puir chap's vera shoes was full o' the stuff."

"I'm no' heedin'," says I, "if the floor's an inch thick. I'll be glad to see a face o' ma own age."

"Oh, she'll hardly be as juvenile as a' that," he says. "Still, if ye insist on bein' happy aboot it, I must try to jine ye. But the bouquet would never dae."

"I've had thoughts o' decoratin' their room wi' roses," I says.

Frederick shook his head.

JUST JEMIMA

“Mrs. Parkins wants a’ the roses for the table.”

“Weel, there’s plenty o’ Sweet William.”

“Supposin’ his name was Abraham! Ye could get hundreds o’ yellow pansies, though.”

“Yellow’s forsaken. They might mak’ her think o’ bein’ deserted in a strange boardin’ hoose, without the price o’ a stamp to write to her mither, like a young bride I once read about.”

“And what happened to her?”

“Never you mind! If ye winna help me, I wish ye would clay up.”

“Dinna be cross, Jemima,” says he. “Get Mrs. Parkins’s permission to decorate the room, and I’ll get ye a’ the flowers ye can stick in it.”

“Chaps ye!” says I. “Ye can be rael nice when ye like, Frederick.”

“Mak’ it ‘Alec,’” says he.

“I’ll split the difference and ca’ ye

A FLORAL TRIBUTE

‘Fralec,’” says I, and gaed back to ma work.

Next mornin’ I approached Mrs. Parkins about the floral tribute. She said she would ha’e nae objections to a few flowers, but I wasna to mak’ a display o’ the thing.

“I suppose ye’ve naething in the way o’ cupids, mem,” I says. “China or plaster o’ paris or alabaster ——”

“No nonsense of that sort, Jemima,” says she afore I was finished.

“I once had a cupid frae a bridescake, but unfortunately I devoured the head off it,” I says. “‘Hoo often,’ as ma fayther would say, ‘dae we wish we had preserved the thing we ha’e destroyed!’ Ah, me! I could dae wi’ that cupid noo! what fun to ha’e it keekin’ ower the mirror, or oot o’ the soap dish, to gi’e the bridal pair a welcome surprise!”

“I’m extremely thankful that your

JUST JEMIMA

cupid is no more," she says, wi' a smile. "Remember, you must never take the slightest liberty with a guest."

"Right oh!" says I, without thinkin', and had to ask her pardon.

The cook was feelin' low that night, in spite o' an extra cup o' cocoa, so I thought to cheer her up wi' the happy news. But, if ye'll believe me, I only done the opposite.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" she cries. "What's this ye're tellin' me? And I hoped I would ha'e been safe frae sich a thing in this hoose. I'm sure I've thrown up dozens o' guid places for less."

"I canna see what's upsettin' ye," I says in astonishment. "It's no' as if ye would be comin' in contact wi' them as I will, and a' the extra work it'll mean for you winna be worth speakin' aboot. Ye ken it's me that scrapes the tatties and shills the peas, etcetera."

A FLORAL TRIBUTE

“It’s no’ that,” says she, groanin’ and preparin’ for a third cup o’ cocoa.

“Weel, what is it?” says I. “Can ye no’ rejoice wi’ them that does rejoice?”

“No, I canna, never could, and never will!” she says.

“I’m sorry I spoke,” says I; “but I really think ye’re daft, cooky. What’s your objections to ha’ein’ a honeymoon pair in the hoose?”

“I canna rest for thinkin’ hoo soon their joy’ll be changed to grief,” she says, helpin’ hersel’ to enough cocoa for six persons.

“It’s you for a pleasant Sunday evenin’!” says I, and left her to droon her sorrows.

When I got to ma room, what think ye I seen lyin’ on the bed? The umbrella I had thought never to handle again! There was a note wi’ it in queer writin’. This was it:—

JUST JEMIMA

“ When you was serving dinner a young man come to the door and asked for you and if you had got your umbrella because he had never heard from you. If you ever speak of this to me as long as I live I will put metal pollish in the soup and kill all the boarders and they will lie at your door.

“ Yours affec.,
“ COOK.”

At first I laughed, and then I sat doon on ma faithful box and grat.

Next afternoon, bein' free, I gaed doon to the shore, and afore long I cam' on Mr. Shark and Miss Tinto. Gracious Powers! thinks I to masel', if only they would speak to me first, what a chance for a word in season, as ma fayther would call it!

And they did—at least, Mr. Shark waved me ower to see some new patent beast he had discovered.

When he had finished his bit lecture, I thanked him, and then, wi' a meanin' look frae him to her, I remarks:

A FLORAL TRIBUTE

“ Maybe ye’ll ha’e heard, mem, sir, that Mrs. Parkins is expectin’ a honeymoon pair next week.”

“ Really! ” says she.

“ Indeed! ” says he.

I gaed awa’ wonderin’ if it was me that was daft, after a’.

Still, I couldna help gettin’ excited as the time cam’ near. On the mornin’ o’ the day, Frederick fetched me a basket o’ flowers frae his mither’s wee garden, and I put as many as Mrs. Parkins would let me into the green room which was preserved for the happy pair. Mind ye, I took great care wi’ the job, and great pride in it forbye. I imagined Mrs. Pabbity comin’ in for the first time, and throwin’ up her hands, and exclaimin’:—

“ Heavens! How charming, Geoffrey ”
(or whatever his front name was) “ dear! ”

And him replyin’:—

“ Exquisite, my darling! Somebody

JUST JEMIMA

has done it specially for us. May heaven reward her!"

Weel, the day arrived at last, and in the afternoon the Westerbay cab dunted up to the door. I heard it wi' beatin' heart frae the landin' upstairs. It was Frederick's job to open the door and carry up the luggage. Mrs. Parkins hersel' brought up the guests, and I was supposed to lead the way to their room.

When I seen what was comin' up the stair then, I could ha'e led the way to the coal cellar.

He was a wee, bowly-legged, button-nosed man, which would never see fifty again, and she was about the same age, and as lovely as a fried egg when ye're no' hungry. Afterwards I heard she was his third.

And the first thing the man said when he got inside the room was:—

“Kindly have these flowers removed.

A FLORAL TRIBUTE

Flowers are unhealthy in a sleeping apartment."

If I hadna coonted ten then, I would ha'e gi'ed him a word or twa. But for Mrs. Parkins's sake I done ma various duties without a murmur. Then I made a bee-line for ma own room, and ran into Frederick in the passage, and afore I kent where I was, he had kissed me.

XI

PUNISHING FREDERICK

I WAS that astonished I couldna say a word. I jist pushed past him and ran into ma room, and bolted the door, and sat doon on ma faithful box. Possibly I done a short weep. I was angry, but no' as angry as I wanted to be. Maybe I had used up the maist o' ma anger against the Pabbity man. A' the same, I was greatly displeased wi' Frederick. I had never thought he would dae sich a thing. Once I had a sort o' dream that he had done it, but I was never a believer in dreams; at least, ma fayther says dreams is a' nonsense, except them in the Bible.

Ay, I was seriously offended wi' Frederick, and I made up ma mind to let him see it.

But I got little time for ma gloomy re-

PUNISHING FREDERICK

flections. Cook cam' and said there was tea to be took up to the green room. I took it up, wishin' it was cod liver ile.

Mrs. Pabbity opened the door, and I heard Mr. Pabbity, which was lookin' oot o' the window, sayin' it was worth a long journey to get sich fine air and sich a glorious view.

"Come in," says Mrs. Pabbity, and her voice was soft, and she didna look as nipit-like as when I seen her first. "Would you mind telling me your name?" she says, when I had set doon the tray and was for retirin'.

"Jemima, mem," I says as respectful as I could, for Mrs. Parkins's sake.

"And was it you, Jemima, who made the room so beautiful with flowers?"

I was that took aback I could only nod ma head.

"William," says she, "it is just as I guessed."

JUST JEMIMA

Then Mr. Pabbity turned and says:—

“ Sorry if I hurt your feelings, Jemima. It was nice of you to think of the flowers, but they agree best with me when they are growing outside. Still, we are obliged to you all the same.”

And afore I kent it, there was two half-crowns in ma hand, and Mrs. Pabbity was askin’ questions about Westerbay like clockwork.

I got oot o’ the room, wishin’ it was possible to kick masel’ wi’ both feet spontaneously. Oh, me! I doubt I’ll never ha’e ma fayther’s wisdom that winna judge folk by their outsides. Hoo true it is that a face like a cookin’ fig may conceal a heart as lovely as a three-and-sixpenny peach!

In the kitchen, a wee while later, I suddenly bursted into song.

“ Stop it!” cries cook. “ Ye’ve made me singe the white sauce.”

“ Never heed!” says I. “ See what I

PUNISHING FREDERICK

got frae Mr. Pabbity! And you're to tak' one o' them."

It was really an impulsiveness on ma part, though I had felt vexed for her ever since her disappointment ower the umbrella.

"Five shillin's!" she exclaims, "and he hasna been half an hour in the hoose! What for did he send me half-a-crown, lassie? What did he say?"

"Weel," says I, "seein' his bride was there he couldna exactly send it wi' fondest love—jist for luck, I suppose."

She gi'ed me a look, then turned her back and started weepin' into the sauce.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" she says. "Ye've heaped fire and brimstone on ma head, Jemima! For I ken the money was never intended for me, and the sauce was singed afore ever ye let oot a squeak."

"What's the odds," says I. "Tak' your share, or I'll put it doon your back!"

"Na, na, dearie," she says, facin' me,

JUST JEMIMA

“keep what’s your own, and put it into War Savin’s, and I’ll still ha’e your kind thought. I’m auld enough to ken the value of money to young folk; but to me it’s jist dross—filthy dross!” she cries, wi’ a great wave o’ the pan.

And splash gaed the sauce ower the face o’ the auld grandfayther clock!

We sat doon and laughed like to end oorsel’s.

As ma fayther—or Soloman—says, it’s but a step frae the ridiculous to the supreme. At ony rate, it done cook guid, and she was cheery for the rest o’ the afternoon, and the dinner was first class—even the Colonel didna try to bite his wife’s nose off when she said the fish puddin’ was delicious.

Durin’ dinner I never let Frederick catch ma eye, and afterwards I left him to clear the tables hissel’. I gaed into the kitchen and says:—

PUNISHING FREDERICK

“Cooky, I’ve an awfu’ big favour to ask ye.”

“Say it,” says she.

“It’s a heap to ask, but could ye think to dae ma share o’ the dishes? I dinna feel up to it.”

“Are ye no’ weel, dearie?” says she as kind as kind. “Of course I’ll dae the washin’ up, and onything else ye like. Sit doon and ha’e your supper, and then ye’ll gang straight to yer bed.”

I was hungry enough, but I hadna the face to eat.

“I’ll gang to ma room,” I says, “and maybe I’ll feel abler later on.”

And I gaed and sat doon on ma faithful box, and wondered hoo Frederick would like the cook’s comp’ny instead o’ mines.

But the time was terrible slow in passin’. I thought Frederick would never come to his supper, and then I thought him and cook would never finish eatin’; and’ a’ the

JUST JEMIMA

time I kept gettin' hungrier and hungrier. At long last I heard them gang into the scullery for to wash up, and I says to masel':—

“Noo I'll slip along to the kitchen and nab something to eat.”

I was turnin' the handle of ma door like a burglar when I heard a knock at the back door, so I waited till the coast would be clear. After a long while I heard cook openin' the door, and then I heard:—

“Guid evenin'. Can I see Miss Just?”

Merciless Powers! It was the porter!

Then cook says:

“Ye canna see her the night, young man. I doubt she's sickenin' for the Turkish Flue. Has she never let ye ken about the umbrella?”

“Ay,” says he, for I had sent him a post-card tellin' him to leave it in the lounge next time. “Ay,” he says, vera slow, “but

PUNISHING FREDERICK

it's no' the umbrella I want to see her about."

"Aweel," says cook, "it doesna matter what it is, for ye canna see her. She was able for neither her work nor her meat, and I expect she's in bed by noo. I'm gaun to gi'e her a pig to her feet and a pint o' double strong cocoa, and if that doesna sort her, I'll ha'e to get the mistress to her. It doesna dae to trifle wi' the flue."

I thought she would haver for ever, and he would be dumb for ditto, but at last he coughs and says:—

"Would ye tak' her a message?"

"If she's no' in a ragin' fever," says cook.

"Tell her I'm unco vexed to hear about her low state," says he, stammerin' a bit, "and if she recovers, she'll find me at the usual place, at the usual time."

"Weel," says cook, important-like, "if

JUST JEMIMA

she's no' abnormally temperate, she'll get your message, young man. Guidnicht." And she shut the door.

I could ha'e tore ma hair. A pint o' cocoa, and Frederick hearin' every word! Oh, me! I was that hungry and angry, I wished I was hame.

After a long time I got up courage again to try and get some food, but jist when I was aboot to start, I heard cook and Frederick back in the kitchen. If Frederick hadna been there I would ha'e gaed ben and said I was better, but I couldna face him. I was wonderin' what Mrs. Parkins would say if I gi'ed up ma place, when there was a wee tap at the door.

I opened it an inch and kept behind it. Mercy! it was Frederick which spoke.

"Are you feelin' ony better, Jemima?" says he.

"I'm nae worse," says I, short-like.

PUNISHING FREDERICK

“Cook’s busy makin’ your cocoa,” he says.

I didna reply.

“Jemima,” says he, “I’ve got something to tell ye.”

“Ye can keep your apologies,” says I.

“I had nae intention o’ apologisin’,” he says, in his quiet way, “though I’m surely sorry to ha’e angered ye. But I couldna help masel’, Jemima. Ye looked as if ye had been near to greetin’, and ye was that rosy and bonny ——”

“Behave yoursel’!” says I.

“But that’s no’ what I wanted to tell ye.”

I canna think what made me so ill-tempered, but I told him flat I didna want to hear anything.

He gi’ed a sigh.

“I’ll ask a question, then,” he says. “Are ye gaun to meet that porter chap on Sunday?”

JUST JEMIMA

“That’s ma affair,” I says, and shut the door.

“I hope ye’ll be better in the mornin’,” I heard him say, and then he gaed hame.

After that I couldna stick ma ain company. I gaed ben to the kitchen and said I was able for onything.

Cook seemed a wee thing disappointed; she would like to ha’e doctored me, I think.

“I’ve turned doon the beds, so there’s naething for ye to dae up the stairs,” she says, “and here’s your cocoa—double strong and extra sweet.”

I thanked her as best I could.

“Could ye eat onything?” she speirs, after what seemed ages.

“Maybe, if I was tempted,” I replies.

At that she smiled.

“Wait!” she whispers, and, wi’ her finger to her lips, she gaed frae the kitchen as if she was walkin’ on eggs. Soon she

PUNISHING FREDERICK

cam' back wi' a wee parcel and opened it for me to see.

“ Cheese!” I nearly yells, for the hoose hadna seen cheese for a month.

“ Whisht!” she says. “ If the boarders got wind o' this, they would raid the kitchen! It cam' frae ma sister that's workin' on a farm. Shut the door, lassie, and open the window, and you and me'll ha'e it toasted. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I ha'e few pleasures left, but a bit toasted cheese is one o' them. The smell aye minds me o' an aunt that might ha'e left me her siller, but didna.”

“ Cheer up!” says I; “ ye're no' that aged. Maybe the cheese'll cause ye to dream o' somebody nicer nor an aunt to-night. It's awfu' kind o' ye to share it.”

“ Oh, dinna praise me!” she cries. “ I maun confess I had intended for to devour it in secret, in ma bed. But I like ye,

JUST JEMIMA

lassie, and ye're welcome," and she cam' ower and gi'ed me a hug.

I was that touched I couldna say onything, but I vowed I would buy her something wi' the half-crown.

Somehow I didna enjoy the toasted cheese as much as I expected. I gaed to ma bed early, and wished I hadna. I tried to think o' Mr. Shark and Miss Tinto, o' Mr. and Mrs. Pabbity, o' the porter, even; but they a' slipped through ma mind like broken eggs through a basket. I tried countin' to a thousand, and imagined I was a horse breathin' hard on a frosty day. I said ma prayers twice, the second time includin' the porter, and a P. S. for Frederick—but it made nae difference.

Still, I believe I would ha'e drapped off about 11 p. m. if cook, passin' to her bed, hadna opened ma door and speired if I was sleepin'.

"Jist about it," says I.

PUNISHING FREDERICK

“ I forgot to ask ye,” says she, “ if ye heard the news aboot Frederick.”

“ What news? ” says I.

“ Aweel,” she says, “ if he hasna told ye, I’d better no’ say onything aboot it. Guidnicht, dearie.”

Though she had been kind to me, I could ha’e rose and kicked her then.

Oh, what a night!

XII

CAPTAIN SMITH

THE next week was pretty dull. But for a new boarder arrivin', and cook drappin' the tureen o' lentil soup twa minutes afore dinner, there would ha'e been next to naething to put in ma bography about "Seaview."

The new boarder was a lady, single—and likely to remain that—which had lately had the flue, and could talk o' naething except her simpsons, or something o' the sort. She drank bilin' water till I was feart she would turn into a steam engine. The tureen was a total loss, and vera little o' the soup was saved. The boarders had to get what Mrs. Parkins called Emergency Soup—it was maistly seasonin'—and cook was highly depressed that night, and dreamed she was torpedoed

CAPTAIN SMITH

along wi' Colonel Beetle, which saved hissel' by pinchin' the kitchen table and leavin' her to droon, after hittin' her ower the nut wi' a spurtle that was his oar. But I couldna believe the Colonel would really dae sich a thing, even to his wife. As ma fayther says, aye think the best o' folk in this world, and maybe ye'll be saved a heap o' apologisin' in the next.

Ay, it was a pretty dull week, and the weather was terrible close and maistly wet—which meant afternoon tea for the boarders every blessed day, for they was a' ower up in years to excuse theirsels in the rain. I tried to keep cheery, but something seemed to ha'e gaed wrang wi' ma spirits, though I managed to eat ma usual without ony great difficulty.

Frederick never referred to that unlucky night, except that he speired for ma health the mornin' after—and got a frozen answer. Maybe he deserved it, but some-

JUST JEMIMA

way I couldna prove to masel' that he did; for though he hadna exactly apologised, he had said he was sorry. He seemed to be jist the same as afore, but I kent there was a difference. I didna gang to his mithers' on the Sunday. I gaed up the Sunnyburn Road, but I didna meet the porter, and I heard afterwards that there had been a special train that day. Of course, it was right that the traffic o' the railway should be carried on. In ony case, I merely wanted to tell the porter that I couldna meet him again—for a long while, onyway. He wrote me a letter upbraidin' me in the richest language—I was sure he had got it frae a book—and I sent him a short note biddin' him cheer up and pay attention to his duty, and maybe he would live to die a station master.

There was naething daein', as far as I could see, in the love line betwixt Mr. Shark and Miss Tinto, but I wasna

CAPTAIN SMITH

despairin', for at their time o' life folk dinna usually jump at marriage like a hungry cat at a finnan haddie. They keep gaun back and forward and round about, sniffin'-like, and whiles naething comes o' it at a'. Ye really canna dae onything to help them, and they're that easy scared.

"We must jist ha'e patience," I remarks to Mrs. Parkins, one morning at the end of the week.

"What on earth are you talking about?" says she.

I drawn her attention at the window to Miss Tinto switherin' at the garden gate leadin' to the shore, and then to Mr. Shark, which was walkin', doubled up, along the sand as if he was lookin' for his lunch.

"Still," says I, "I believe Cupid'll triumph ower the wilks in the long run, mem, and we'll live to see a weddin' at 'Seaview.'"

"Don't be absurd, Jemima," she says.

JUST JEMIMA

“ You should try to interest your mind in things that concern yourself.”

“ It’s jist that I would like to see everybody happy, mem ——”

“ And do you imagine,” she says, “ that marriage is the only thing to make people happy? ”

“ Single folk imagines it is,” says I, and then I minded Mr. Parkins, and was rael glad when cook cam’ up the stair wi’ a wire.

That would ha’e been Frederick’s duty, but he hadna turned up that mornin’; he wasna comin’ till the afternoon, Mrs. Parkins had told cook, though she hadna mentioned what he was awa’ for. If I had been curious, I would ha’e wondered mair nor I did, no’ that there was much time for wonderin’ in the mornin’ at “ Seaview.”

“ No answer,” says Mrs. Parkins to cook, which respectfully scooted, and to me she says:—

CAPTAIN SMITH

“ We must prepare the white room for a new guest—Captain Smith, a nephew of Colonel Beadle—who will arrive in time for dinner. Captain Smith, I believe, is recovering from an illness got in the war.”

“ A real sojer!” I cries. “ He’ll be young, I suppose, mem.”

“ Probably he is,” says she, “ but I hardly see how his age can concern you, Jemima. Come now, get busy!”

“ Wi’ pleasure!” says I, for I was feelin’ quite set up wi’ the thought o’ a young face in the dinin’-room.

When I got doon to the kitchen I cries:—

“ Cooky, what dae ye think? There’s a real, live young man comin’ to ‘ Sea-view,’ and he’s an officer back frae the wars—so I hope ye’ve got an extra fine programme o’ dinner for the night.”

“ The programme’s fine enough,” says she, “ but I doubt the dinner’ll be so-so. I

JUST JEMIMA

dinna seem to be able to turn oot onything perfect the noo."

"Ye're ower modest," says I. "Ye've had several successes this last week. On Tuesday, for instance, the boarders couldna say enough about the dinner—they was still talkin' about it in the lounge ——"

"I wouldna be surprised to hear they had gaed on talkin' about it in their sleeps," she says. "Yon was a terrible dinner, lassie."

"Terrible, but tasty," says I, "and it's the tasty that gets the votes. And I meant to tell ye that last night there was great praise for the fish frissoles ——"

"I dinna believe ye! I wouldna ha'e eaten one o' them for a pension," she says, but a' the same she began to cheer up. "Weel, I'll dae ma best for your sojer, lassie," she says shortly. "In ony case I wanted to mak' something extra nice for

CAPTAIN SMITH

Frederick the night. I suppose ye ken where he is the day."

"No," says I.

"Neither dae I," says she. "But he's a nice lad, is Frederick, eh?"

"Nice enough," says I, as if he had been a sago puddin' without sugar.

"Oh, but I think he's extra nice, and it'll be a bad job for this hoose if he leaves."

"Wha said he was leavin'?" I cries afore I could think.

"It's no' jist certain," says she, "but seein' he hasna spoke to you aboot it, ye'd better no' say I mentioned it. It was jist a passin' remark o' his, and maybe he wasna serious."

"Weel, it's nae affair o' mines," I says, "and it's time I was gettin' the room ready for the Captain."

I was at the door when she says:—

"Ha'e you and him cast oot?"

JUST JEMIMA

“What for would we dae that?” I asks, wi’ a deceitful smile—oh, I’ll admit it was deceitful.

“I’m sure I canna say,” says she; “but young folks casts oot for vera little, and it struck me ye ha’e been kin’ o’ short wi’ Frederick the last week or so.”

“I ha’ena noticed it, masel’,” says I.

“I was wonderin’ if that porter man had onything to dae wi’ it,” says she.

“There’s naething wrang wi’ the porter,” I tells her. “Him and me is auld frien’s noo.”

“I’ve naething against the porter,” she says, “except that he’s nae shakes compared wi’ Frederick.”

“Frederick’ll be feelin’ his ears burnin’, wherever he is,” says I.

She gi’ed me a solemn look.

“Like yoursel’, Jemima,” says she, “Frederick’s been rael kind to me, and I’m no’ so fed up wi’ kindness that I tak’

CAPTAIN SMITH

it for granted." And suddenly she wipes her eyes wi' her apron, sayin': "Ye're young enough to be thinkin' o' lads, lassie—though I was young at it masel', without success; but ye'll no' chance on a lad like Frederick every day—and that's ma advice to you, and I hope ye'll tak' it as kindly as it's meant." And she stottered into the scullery afore I could speak—no' that I had a word to say.

I was angry, but whether it was wi' her, or Frederick, or masel', I couldna be exactly sure. When I was daein' the room for the Captain I done a sma' weep, sort o' wishin' I was hame in ma fayther's hoose, at the fireside betwixt his serious face and ma mither's cheery yin. However, I'm no' easy beat, and it was a lovely day, and the sea was like silver and gold, and the flowers was growin', and there was a heap to be thankful for—at least, ma fayther would ha'e said there was.

JUST JEMIMA

I was puttin' the window screens straight, when I chanced to look doon at the garden, and the sight I beheld near made me yell. I fair lost ma head, and ran back and rang the bell for the mistress. Then mindin' that cook would come, I rushed to the stairhead to stop her, and bashed into Mrs. Parkins, knockin' the puff oot o' her.

But I had nae thought then o' beggin' her pardon.

"Quick!" says I. "Come and see! Miss Tinto and Mr. Shark in the summer hoose, and he's holdin' her hand!"

"Really, Jemima!" says she.

"Ay, really and truly, mem!" says I. "I wouldna wonder if they're embracin' by noo."

Cook comin' up the stair then put me dumb, and by the time Mrs. Parkins had explained that she hadna rung, and that Frederick would need to examine the bells,

CAPTAIN SMITH

I had come to ma senses and was ready for to apologise.

“ You must try to be less easily excited,” Mrs. Parkins says to me. “ I shall trust you to keep as sacred what you have just witnessed—or imagined.”

“ I wouldna gi’e the puir things awa’ for gold untold, mem,” says I. “ I wonder if he’ll announce the engagement at dinner this evenin’. I fancy I see him risin’ to his feet, jist after the roly-poly, and cryin’ for silence ——”

“ Oh, get away with you!” she says, strivin’ no’ to laugh. “ I’ll be extremely angry if you say another word.”

I would risk a guid deal to mak’ Mrs. Parkins laugh, for she needs it, but I hope I ken when to clay up.

I was rael happy that minute, but the next, when I was alone, ma spirits fell doon like a bag o’ coals.

“ Oh, Heaven!” says I to masel’, “ ha’e

JUST JEMIMA

I caught the flue, or is it merely the dumps?"

Aweel, the day slipped awa', and in the afternoon Frederick turned up. He seemed to me to be lookin' better than ever I had seen him, and somehow I had a queer wee cauld shudder about ma heart. There was plenty work o' waitin' for him, and I had scarcely a word wi' him. And then it was time for Captain Smith to arrive.

I was at ma post at the stairhead when the Westerbay cab dunted up, but as Frederick—a wee bit late, for he should ha'e been ready outside—opened the door, I couldna help slipping doon a few steps, jist to see what the Captain was like. But I hardly noticed him then. I never got sich a start in a' ma born days.

Frederick seemed to fa' back, and then he pulled hissel' up, and stood as stiff as a poker and saluted like a sojer.

CAPTAIN SMITH

And the Captain he fell back and pulled hissel' up, but he didna half return the salute. He gi'ed a laugh and cries, "Hullo, Sergeant!" and then he stepped forward and took Frederick's hand, and shook it for a' the world as if Frederick had been his long lost brither!

But for Mrs. Parkins at the foot o' the stair and a lump as hard as a nut in ma throat, I believe I would ha'e yelled "hurray"—though I didna seem to ha'e onything to hurray about.

XIII

“ARE YE OWER YOUNG?”

I DINNA ken hoo I got through the dinner that night. Ma fingers was a' thumbs, and ma head was in a bizz. I didna notice that cook had surpassed hersel', and I clean forgot what I had seen in the summer-hoose that forenoon. However, Mr. Shark didna mak' ony announcement, and it was weel for me he didna, for onything oot o' the usual then would ha'e sent me clean off ma onion. It would ha'e took vera little to ha'e made me drap the potatoes and dance on them.

Frederick wasna hisselt' either. Him and me had a collision, and the roly-poly was near a waster. Fortunately it was sticky as weel as tender, and, like the man in the railway accident, kept its seat though severely shook. But it was a nar-

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row escape for Mrs. Pabbity frae gettin' the pink sauce on her back hair. The fact is, folk in boardin' hooses, even o' the best quality, never ken the risks they run.

It was a mercy I had naething in ma hand when the next shock cam'. The Captain and the Colonel and Mrs. Beetle was the last to rise, and on their way to the door the Colonel suddenly turned to Frederick at the sideboard and, without sayin' a word, shook his hand and clapped him on the shoulder, and then stottered oot afore Frederick was half through his salute.

“Much ado about naething, Jemima!” says Frederick, wi' a sort o' laugh, but red in the face.

I didna reply, bein' unable owin' to another silly lump in ma throat and a shoogliness about ma knees.

He started to clear awa', and I done the same. The conversation was few, and he

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performed the maist o' it. It was chiefly about the holiday folk he had seen in the town. A question was tormentin' me, but I wouldna ha'e asked it to save ma neck. If he didna like to tell me, I would carry ma curiosity to the grave; for I'll confess I was curious this time.

Later on, in the kitchen, it was cook that tried to keep up the chat, but she has nae gift o' the gab, so it was a quiet supper, though an extra guid one. Frederick praised it, and so did I, but we could hardly finish what cook put on oor plates, and I could see that she was sair disappointed; in fac', there was tears in her eyes.

"I made a special wee roly for ye," she says, when I was gi'ein' inward thanks that the feast was ended; "but maybe ye'll no' be heedin' about it noo."

"No' heedin' about it?" says Frederick, wi' a quick look at me. "Just gi'e us the

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chance, cook! If it's half as guid as the big one looked, I wouldna trust masel' long in its comp'ny. What dae you say, Jemima?”

“Ay,” I answers, checkin' back a groan; “the boarders was fair greedy for your roly, cook. If I had drapped it on the floor, there would ha'e been a rare scramble for it, I can assure ye.”

“Weel, weel,” she says, cheerin' up, “I wouldna wonder if the wee one's nicer nor the big one.”

When she set it on the table, I see Frederick's face fa', and I felt like sinkin' to the lino. Wee? It was a thumper!

“Noo,” says cook, “ye'll ha'e to divide it betwixt ye, for roly doesna agree wi' me.”

As I've said afore, I canna bear to hurt onybody's feelin's, and Frederick's pretty much the same. We shifted that roly—maybe Heaven helped us; but when I'm

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an auld wife (if I'm spared) I'll still remember it, and tell its history to ma children's children, even to the fourth generation (if ony). And I'll say this for the roly: the struggle to win outside ma share took ma mind frae its trouble for the time bein'.

At last Frederick got up and gi'ed cook a poke o' peppermints he had bought in the town; and peppermints is about as scarce as peacocks' eggs nooadays. Cook near grat on his neck. They was like manna in the wilderness, she declared.

"Jemima," he says, "I've had a day off, so it's up to me to dae the dishes. Sit still and rest ye."

"Thank ye," says I, "but I prefer to dae ma bit."

"I'll dae the lot," says cook, "and you young folks can tak' it easy for a change. That roly o' mines doesna digest in five minutes"—which was exceedin'ly true.

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Of course, we didna listen to her, and after some argie-bargie we started on the job as usual.

It was Frederick which spoke first.

“Ma mither would like ye to gang to your supper on Sunday,” he says. “I’ll maybe no’ be there masel’, but there’s a lady comin’ to see ma mither—a Red Cross Nurse that has been in France and Italy, and ma mither thinks ye would like to hear her stories.”

“I’m obliged to your mither,” says I, and then without thinkin’—“I thought your mither didna care to hear about the war.”

“I daresay the nurse’ll be discreet in what she tells,” he says. “But ma mither’s like her auld sel’ noo; the doctor says her nerves is strong again. I wouldna wonder if your wee visits ha’e helped her a heap, Jemima, so I hope ye’ll gang on Sunday.”

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I was wonderin' what I could answer when there cam' a knock on the door.

"Maybe you'd better open," says he.

I gaed wi' a forebodin' in ma heart, and I wasna surprised to see the porter on the step.

After a little politeness he asked what way I hadna answered his last letter, which I had received but the day afore. He was inclined to be on his high horse, and I wasna sorry, for it's mair difficult to deal wi' a chap when he doesna show the spirit o' a jeely-fish.

"Paper's dear," says I, "and a stamp costs three bawbees, and I ha'e ma parents to write to twice a week and ma brithers once; and forbye a' that, I'm no' keen on correspondence wi' specimens o' the opposite sect."

"Yon last letter ye wrote to me was atrocious cruel," he says.

"I didna mean it that way," I tells him.

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"But I would sooner ye didna write ony mair to me. The postman's beginnin' to smile, and I draw the line at a scandal."

"Weel, what about Sunday?" says he.
"We can talk it ower then, Jemima."

I shook ma head.

After a bit he says:—

"Ha'e ye asked the boots about his Red Cross friend?" It wasna the words, but the way he said them.

I seen it was time to mak' an end.

"What about Sunday?" he says again.

I answered gently but firmly:—

"Naething daein', Peter."

"D'ye mean that?" he says. "And the Sunday after?"

"Ditto," says I. "Noo I'm unco busy, so I'll bid ye guidnicht."

I held oot ma hand.

"Ye're a flirt!" says he, and walked off.

If he had waited, I think I would ha'e struck him. Me a flirt? The very idea

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was proposterous! The tears cam' to ma eyes, but I bashed them awa', like the girl in the story.

“Ye silly kid!” I says to masel', “dae ye want Frederick to see ye've been greetin'?”

Wi' a stiff upper lip I returned to ma duty.

“Ha'e ye done naething since I gaed to the door?” I asks.

“I removed to the kitchen,” answers Frederick. “I could ha'e heard your chat in here.”

It was maist provokin', for I'll confess I would ha'e had sma' objection to Frederick hearin' every word—except the last.

“It was merely Mr. Taggart, the porter,” says I, wi' ma nose up.

“So I supposed,” says he.

“It might ha'e been another chap,” says I.

“True,” he says, “and I beg your par-

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don, Miss Just. There’s nae reason why ye should stick to one—or two—admirers.”

Ma cheeks was burnin’.

“Dae ye think I’m a flirt?” I cries, like a silly goat.

“What dae ye think yoursel’?” he says, in that quiet voice o’ his. “But if ye are, Jemima, I’m sure ye canna help it. Only I wish ye would be open wi’ me. If ye’re set on walkin’ oot wi’ the porter, tell me and be done wi’ it. I’ll no’ seek to interfere. I believe he’s a decent enough chap——”

“Stop it!” I says. “Ha’e *you* been open wi’ *me*?”

“Open wi’ you?” he says, starin’ at me. I managed to get a grip o’ masel’.

“When I cam’ here at first,” I says cauldly — at least luke-warmly — “ye wanted to be ma frien’; and I’ll no’ deny ye was kind as ony frien’ could be. But

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whilst I tell't ye nearly everything aboot masel', you kept your secrets. That's a'!"

"I think I see what ye mean," he says, speakin' slow.

"I hope ye dae," says I. "But, of course, I dinna want to hear onything noo."

"Come, Jemima," says he. "Ye surely ken I wanted to tell ye a while back, and ye wouldna listen. It was the night ye was badly, and the porter cam' to the door ——"

"If ye had wanted, ye could ha'e told me long afore that, that ye had been a sojer," I says.

"It wasna maybe so easy for me as ye imagine," he says. "Jemima, will ye listen noo?"

"If ye trifle like this," says I, "we'll never get through wi' the dishes."

"Speak o' the dishes again, and I'll smash every one o' them!" he says, and I

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believe he would ha'e done it. “Listen, Jemima. It'll no' tak' three minutes.”

Maybe it didna tak' so long. As ma fayther says, truth mak's a short tale.

“I was three years in Flanders,” he says, “and then I was sent hame wi' heart trouble. When I was through wi' the hospitals, I got ma discharge and cam' hame to find ma mither in bad health wi' her nerves. I think she would ha'e been dead but for Mrs. Parkins's kindness. Ye see, there's but the twa o' us, mither and me. Weel, she was terrified I would be called up again, and the doctor said I would ha'e to dae everything to keep her mind off the War. That's why, Jemima, ye never heard us speak about it; that's why I never wore ma badge. And I had to get others, like Mrs. Parkins, to be secret, in case, by some wee wicked chance, a stranger would hear aboot me and then meet ma mither. Then I didna dare to

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gang far awa' frae ma mither, and I offered ma help to Mrs. Parkins, wha needed help badly, in gratitude for her kindness. Then ma mither's nerves and ma own stupid he'rt got better, and I foreseen that the time was comin' when I would ha'e to leave her again. I began to feel I could depend on ye to be kind to ma mither, and so I made up ma mind to tell ye every-thing—only ye wouldna listen. I was at several doctors the day, and I'm fit, as ye see. But I'll no' be needed noo. As for Captain Smith, in case ye're wonderin' where he comes in, I had the luck to dae him a guid turn oot there, and he's made the maist o' it. And so ma story's ended, and I hope ——"

"Oh, I'm glad the war's finished, Alec!" I cries, forgettin' everything but his story. The plate I was holdin' slipped into the sink and broke, but I never heeded.

"I'll no' say I'm sorry, either," he says,

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wi’ a wee smile. “Did ye mean to call me ‘Alec’ the noo?”

“It slipped oot, Frederick,” says I.

He took a step nearer and caught me by the shoulders.

“Jemima,” he says, and I hardly kent his voice, “dinna play wi’ me. Whiles ye mak’ me think one thing, whiles another. But whatever happens, I’ll aye declare ye’re the dearest, bonniest wee——”

“Oh, whisht!” says I. “Cook’ll hear ye.”

“She’s hard o’ hearin’, bless her!” he says. “Jemima!”

“What?” says I.

“If ye wasna so awfu’ young——” He stopped for a moment. “Oh, ay, ye’re far ower young to be sure—sure o’ your heart,” he says. “Are ye no’?”

I couldna face him then, but I felt his kind black eyes on me, and I was feart, yet no’ terrified.

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“Jemima,” he says, after a while, “dae ye think ye’re ower young? Answer, dear.”

It’s a wonder he heard me, for ma voice was nae bigger nor a moose’s whisper:—

“Ma fayther says I’m aulder nor ma years, Alec.”

Printed in the United States of America

